



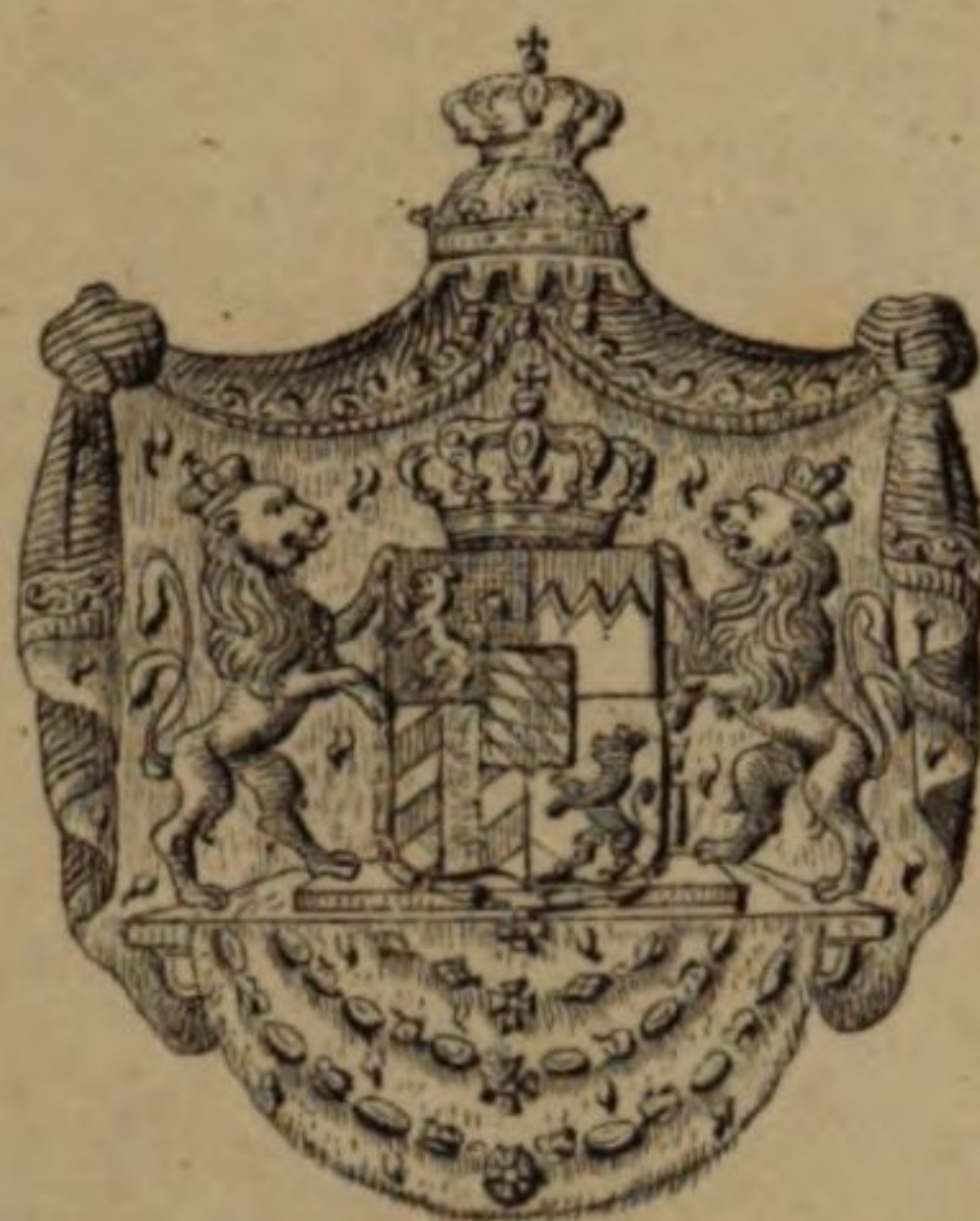
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OR,
THE CONSTANT MAN.
BY THE AUTHOR
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VOL. CCCXV.

DE CLIFFORD; OR, THE CONSTANT MAN.

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PRINTED BY CRAPELET, 9, RUE DE VAUGIRARD.

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OF "TREMAINE," "HUMAN LIFE," ETC.

Cum magnis vixi, cum plebeiis, cum omnibus;
Ut homines noscerem, et meipsum imprimis.

DR. KING'S Epitaph upon Himself.

VOL. II.



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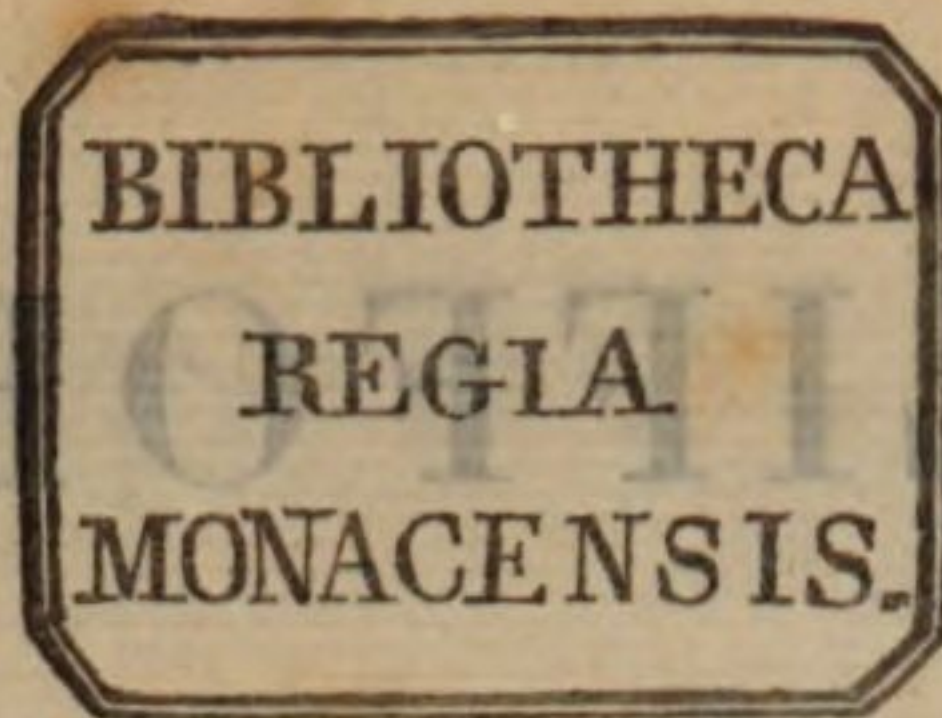
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1841.



THE CONSTANT MAN.

BY THE AUTHOR

OF "THE MAINE," "HUMAN LIFE," ETC.

Com manus vixi, cum plebis, cum omnibus;
Et homines necesse est et meipsum imprimis.
Dr. King's Epitaph upon himself.

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1841.

DE CLIFFORD;

OR,

THE CONSTANT MAN.

CHAPTER I.

OF THE FINE THINGS WHICH PASSED BETWEEN DE CLIFFORD AND MR. MANNERS
ON THE SUBJECT OF SOLITUDE.

Now I see the mystery of your loneliness.

SHAKESPEARE.—*All's Well that Ends Well.*

THE conversation related in the last chapter ceased for a while ; for my kind and sensitive host fell into a reverie upon the last subject, from which, being myself moved by the thought of a very different friendship, I did not seek to disturb him. Such meditation upon the departed dead I held to be sacred, and I cast my eyes upon his books, until he should return to himself.

A few minutes restored him, and he found me turning over the leaves of Zimmerman, misleader of poor Rycroft, whom it forced to walk ten miles a-day to remedy the mischief it had done him.

“ I presume this is a favourite of yours ? ” said I, seeing him quite again in the disposition to converse.

“ He is too great an enthusiast,” replied he, “ for mere sober reason to follow. It requires a high-wrought imagination, like his own, to be affected by him ; some youthful poet, when in love, perhaps like yourself ; some disappointed or fallen Wolsey, whose robe and integrity to heaven is all he has left ; or some Timon, whose wealth, though scattered like water, could not secure him one single friend :—these are they who may devour the pages of the German, and feed their own feelings with his warm romance. Nor are they altogether without attraction. But let no man of common mould, or every-day character, think he will here find the truth of things. As a relaxation, when the bow is too much bent, temporary solitude is delightful—as a permanent position, without object, it is vapid. Like bed, a relief from fatigue or illness ; but

what should we say to a man who, without a cause, lies a-bed all day ?”

“ And yet, if I may take the liberty of remarking it,” said I, “ I understand you shun company.”

“ Flat and common-place, I do.”

“ Can none of your neighbours please you ?”

“ Very few.”

“ May I ask, why ?”

“ Because they *are* flat and common-place.”

I felt answered ; but observed, “ You, however, *do* read Zimmerman.”

“ As a votary of solitude myself, though of a far different temper, I sometimes look into him, as into other men of genius : but I am quite content with my own practical jog-trot notions, which have withdrawn me from certain scenes of the world, which had ceased to interest me, and for no other reason. I pretend not, therefore, to any such dignified seclusion as is, perhaps, attributed to me ; I have neither particular disgusts nor particular refinements. I however defer to every word on the subject to be found in a delightful book, still golden, as it ought to be, in every thinking or classical mind, though, to the disgrace of the age, falling fast into neglect among those coxcombs who think there can be a fashion in sterling literature.”

With that he took down a volume of the *Spectator*, and made me read from a paper by Addison, as follows :

“ True happiness is of a retired nature, and an enemy to pomp and noise ; it arises, in the first place, from the enjoyment of one’s self ; and in the next, from the friendship and conversation of a few select companions : it loves shade and solitude, and naturally haunts groves and fountains, fields and meadows : in short, it feels every thing that it wants within itself, and receives no addition from multitudes of witnesses and spectators. On the contrary, false happiness loves to be in a crowd, and to draw the eyes of the world upon her. She does not receive any satisfaction from the applauses which she gives herself, but from the admiration which she raises in others. She flourishes in courts and palaces, theatres and assemblies, and has no existence but when she is looked upon¹.”

“ I also feel every word of this,” said I, “ and have often exclaimed, in the walk at Maudlin, planted by him who wrote it,

‘ O ! lost to virtue ! lost to manly thought

Who think it solitude to be alone !’

But, if the truth were known, this was perhaps owing more to laziness, and thinking company too often annoying, than any sentimental finery elevating me above my fellows.”

¹ No. 15.

“ I am certainly not one of those who think any company better than none,” observed Mr. Manners. “ Even in town, I have felt myself alone, only without the freedom and independence of being so ; for I agree in the opinion of, I think, Seneca—‘ *Magna civitas, magna solitudo* ;’ and certainly incline to that of Bacon, ‘ Crowds are not company ; faces are but a gallery of pictures, and talk but a tinkling cymbal, where there is no love.’ ”

“ It was because I had had too much of this gallery, and tinkling cymbal, without the love, that I thought I would try my fate here, where they would not interrupt me, nor I them. For I fully admit that an old man, who has lost his powers of amusing or interesting, has no right to be welcomed by the world ; so you see I am not one of those coxcombs or affected hermits who retire because, as they say, the world has used them ill. I did not affect to be either Bolingbroke or Rousseau.”

“ I think you are the very genius of good sense,” said I, “ which neither of those two were ; yet, if you will forgive me, with a spice of the melancholy Jacques.”

“ No,” said he ; “ for though I love the forest of Ardennes, I do not, like him, love melancholy better than laughing, but rather laughing better than melancholy ; and if I laugh at many for remaining in the world, I allow they have a perfect right to laugh at me for quitting it. On both sides I uphold the maxim, ‘ let those laugh that win.’ ”

“ Yet Horace, as it should seem,” said I, “ calls retirement the oblivion, not the enjoyment, of life ; he dwells upon sleep and vacant hours as some of its best pleasures—

‘ Nunc somno et inertibus horis.’

Yet I should think that to sleep away life, and have nothing to do, not only unworthy, but unhappy.”

“ And I think so too,” returned he, “ and *that* most heartily ; but your construction of the passage in Horace is not mine. For his sleep and leisure are but temporary relaxations after a life of trouble, and, as you ought to have added, the

‘ Sollicitæ jucunda oblivia vitæ.’

Besides, he numbers the *veterum libros* among his pleasures, which I take to make a considerable, nay, all the difference. As to the *inertibus horis*, except as ‘ refreshment after toil, ease after pain,’ never was there a greater mistake than to suppose that to have nothing to do is the necessary accompaniment of solitude. On the contrary, the saying of Cicero¹ may be proved by every man who embraces that life, *if he pleases* ; though I allow many do not

¹ Nunquam minus solus quàm solus.

please, and then, of all men, they are most miserable. What philosopher was it who, being told he had no soul because he could not bear company, replied, 'And you have none, because you cannot bear being alone?'"

"The theory," said I, "is perfect, but pray enlighten me more as to the practice."

"The whole," returned he, "is summed up in the little word *employment*."

"Of what sort?"

"No matter, provided it be innocent."

"But employment in solitude! What impetus can there be for it? How is it to be brought about?"

"Ask Cowper. I do not much like his poetry, but I have no objection to the sense and goodness of sentiment in what I call his numerous prose.

'How various his employments whom the world
Calls idle, and who justly in return
Esteems the busy world an idler too!
Friends, books, a garden, and *perhaps his pen*;
Delightful industry enjoyed at home,
And Nature, in her cultivated trim
Drest to his taste, inviting him abroad.'

"As you understand them so well," said I, "favour me with some of the details of these employments."

"Let us suppose fishing," answered he, "of all employments in the world, to those who are not fishers, seemingly the most melancholy, yet nothing, by those who are, is more stoutly denied. A great moral philosopher, who has just appeared¹, calls it a 'cheerful solitude.' Well, shut up a real lover of angling in his fishing-house; let him pass three parts of his daylight at his sport, and the fourth in mending or making his tackle, the man is happy."

"But suppose he is not successful?"

"No matter; he is perpetually buoyed up by that irrepressible support of us all, Hope, and that alone is happiness, greater often than fruition itself."

"But there is another source of interest to minds occupied with greater objects, seemingly more trifling than this, which yet produces more real satisfaction to private feelings than many which appear far more important."

"I long to know it," said I.

"It is the correction of bad habits, even though so trifling to men struggling in the busy world, that they may despise any care about them. I see you are surprised," added he, "but I do not mean what perhaps you think vices, or even very great faults, but merely such as concern what I would call the '*petite morale*.'"

¹ Paley.

“Pray explain.”

“Why, for example, take a man of an irritable habit, inclined naturally to be overset with little things. In the working-day world, brimful as it is of briers, how little chance is there of cure, when every thing that occurs, and every man almost he meets, annoys instead of soothes him. He has not time or leisure to philosophize and recover. Solitude, by exempting him from all extrinsic accession to his malady, gives him full liberty to reason himself out of it, and superintend his cure, till it is perfected. New habits are thus acquired, and the old ones extinguished, during the process of which, how interesting the employment !”

“Have you ever seen an instance of this?” I inquired.

“I have both seen and felt it in my own person, and can safely say—*Ecce signum!* How often, in the walks of the garden we have left, have I lectured myself on this and other defects, till the peaceful scene about me, and my own reason combined, have made me ashamed of myself, and at last I felt a perfect reform, and have bid defiance to spleen ever since. What, indeed, in the way of occupation, does not the man of solitude in every other respect owe to his garden! What interest so varying as well as so intense as what he finds there; insomuch, that the very words solitude, sameness, monotony, seem banished his vocabulary.

“Hence the same philosopher I have just now quoted in praise of fishing, in his account of the various employments that may constitute happiness, enumerates among them ‘the growing of a flower, or even the raising of a cucumber’.¹ But let me ask, are you fond of music?”

“Fond of it, but not an artist.”

“Then you lose one of the sweetest, and, next to books, *the* sweetest resource of in or out-of-door solitude. In doors, what did not his organ do for blind Milton; out of doors, who ever felt alone that heard the nightingale,

‘Warbling at eve when all the woods are still?’

“Ah! those still woods! To a man of contemplation, what is there in the most brilliant scenes, the silken sheen, the jewels rare, the excitement of ‘the royal feast for Persia won,’ to compare one single moment with the pure and happy feelings which an evening walk in them produces? But he who can thus walk, and love to watch the sinking day, and is soothed by the twilight, must be innocent. Solitude indeed is no place for the wicked.”

“I beseech you,” said I, seeing him pause, “go on.”

“Well,” proceeded he, “to come to something of a lower flight—if you are a sportsman, I need not talk to you of shooting, with

¹ He adds, however, the writing of a book, which (*gaudeo referens*) beguiles many an hour.

no companion but your dog. If you have any little handycraft arts, if merely for amusement, but especially if for purposes of utility, where can your interests cease? You may be a carpenter with your tool chest; a turner with your lathe; you may make baskets, weave nets, knit garters, or twist whiplashes like Will Wimble; or, if fond of the politer arts, you may try to paint like Sir George Beaumont.

“What shall I say if you are a farmer? Go to your Virgil on the employments of his *Agricola*, when confined to the house in bad weather, which is a sort of solitude.

‘*Multa forent quæ mox cœlo properanda sereno,
Maturare datur : durum procudit arator
Vomeris obtusi dentem, cavat arbore lintres,
Aut pecori signum, aut numeros impressit acervis.
Exacuunt alii vallos, furcasque bicornes*’.

Here is a picture of employment for you, which must for ever banish the vapours. We see the honest man in his cottage or barn, perhaps hear him whistling while sharpening his stakes or marking his sacks.”

“A pleasing assemblage,” observed I; “but will these fill up the time of the man of education—he who shuns vacuity of mind as his worst enemy?”

“Have you not answered yourself,” returned he shrewdly, “when you suppose him a man of education? I began with an uneducated man, because most difficult to provide for. Let in mind, books of science, natural history, polite literature, moral philosophy, and, above all, religion, and your man of retirement is amply provided for.”

“By religion,” asked I, “do you mean devotion, or the study of divinity?”

“O! both, both,” replied he, with some fervour.

“My reason for asking,” continued I, “is an interested one. For though I have always found questions in divinity, young as I am, more exciting than all others, yet a layman seems to me to be so much in need of assistance, that he can do little without it, and I have therefore been glad to take refuge in authority, and believe what I have been told by my Bible, and my betters, in their mode of expounding it, without examination.”

“It was only becoming at your age,” said he, “and comfortable to every one, particularly those who are busy with the world. As

‘Thus paraphrased by Dryden:

‘But when cold weather and continued rain
The lab’ring husband in his house restrain,
Let him forecast his work with timely care,
Which else is huddled when the skies are fair;
Or hollow trees for boats, or number o’er
His sacks, or measure his increasing store;
Or sharpen stakes,’ etc.

we advance, however, towards that period when the near view of futurity becomes ten times more interesting, and a thousand times more awful, religion is every thing; while, important as I have described them, all other things are nothing. An inquiring mind then seeks convictions of its own, and the power to do this is the pre-eminent and almost exclusive advantage of solitude. Hence, that shrewd Paley, whom I cannot too often quote (and here Mr. Manns took down his work), has this emphatic passage :—‘ A man who is in earnest in his endeavours after the happiness of a future state has, in this respect, an advantage over all the world. For he has constantly before his eyes an object of supreme importance, productive of perpetual engagement and activity, and of which the pursuit (which can be said of no pursuit besides) lasts him to his life’s end ’.”

Mr. Manns then told me, with an air of great satisfaction, that he had already derived from his retreat, and the opportunities it had given him for uninterrupted meditation, benefits which were incalculable, and which all the power and wealth in the world could never balance.

“ It has already,” said he, “ restored me to the confidence necessary for the sweetest and most interesting of all enjoyments—the power, without the alloy of miserable doubt, of conversing with your God. Ever indeed, like you, from my youth up, though not always with the same unction, have I felt the force and beauty of those lines of our most serious poet :

‘ A soul in commune with her God is heaven;
Feels not the tumults and the shocks of life,
The whirls of passion, or the strokes of heart.’

‘ A deity believed is joy begun;
A deity adored is joy advanced;
A deity beloved is joy matured ’.”

“ This, however, with the most satisfied minds, is sadly broken in upon by the distractions of the world, whether through business or dissipation. For, let him be ever so devoutly disposed from natural bias, a man absorbed by ambition or business has not the time, and a man of pleasure has not the disposition, to seek out his Creator, and converse with his attributes. But if he is *not* so disposed, or so biassed; if his mind is unhappily wavering in a labyrinth of uncertainty and contending arguments; in short, if it is not made up what to believe and what to reject, on subjects paramount to all others in the heart of a thinking man, such a man, while immersed in the world, can have no hope of ever seeing land. He will never be cheered by the happy sound of ‘ *Italiam, Italiam.* ’ ”

¹ *Moral Philosophy*, 1, 34.

² Young.

I fully assented to this proposition, and was pleased with its classical allusion, when Mr. Manners went on :—

“Crowns and sceptres, and the utmost refinements of luxury, nay, the most dazzling splendours of fame, sink into absolute nothingness in comparison with this. In the hey-day and buoyancy of youth, indeed, and the struggles which even duty imposes upon our manhood in its meridian, we are too often careless, and, perhaps, think it pardonable to neglect the subjects which I have called paramount to all others. As our friend, the brave and natural Trim, explained his religious neglects : ‘When a soldier has passed a whole day up to his knees in water in the trenches,—perhaps without his dinner—watching in the face of the enemy, he has little time to say his prayers.’ ”

“But there is a time for all things, and he is fortunate, who, if he feels the want of self, or other instruction, and that the seductions of a dissipated or tumultuous, and therefore a thoughtless life, prevent him from righting his vessel and getting into port—he is fortunate, I say, who can retire from that life to seek after truth, as I have done, without disturbance.”

Mr. Manners then went on to tell me that though his early youth, with no other helps than the common instruction derived from church and catechism, was marked by a belief in all the great tenets of religion, because, like me, he never had a thought of questioning them, and was happy in what he might call his ignorance ; yet afterwards, in his meridian, and when too much occupied with the world to give his inquiries fair play, a gloom came over him in the shape of scepticism, for which, as he had always viewed it unhurt before, he could not account.

“I had read Hume, Bolingbroke, and Voltaire,” said he, “at twenty, and, as I thought, had triumphed over their sophisms, and was invulnerable to their sneers. Most strange it was, that at forty I myself suggested doubts to my own mind, which I did not answer, because I was too much plunged in dissipation. There were points, too, of belief demanded of me by divines and commentators, about which it had never occurred to me to hesitate, because, as you say, I took all upon authority, and, coursing gaily down the stream of life, I had neither leisure nor inclination to criticise their soundness. And far happier was I in this unlimited confidence, than when, from an eagerness for still more light, my vision became indistinct. For I began to impose upon myself the impossible task of reconciling contending divines upon articles of faith, which I had formerly believed necessary for our safety, but which I found were deemed so on grounds which to me appeared any thing but firm. To settle when to follow and when to leave these instructors of ours ; to separate enthusiasm from rational piety, cool sense from effervescing zeal, has formed much of the business of this retreat ; and

I trust I may say my efforts have been successful, for they have left me happy and confiding, not now upon authority, but *conviction*. It is best not to doubt; but if you do, how much better to believe upon cool examination and sincere persuasion. To retirement do I owe this happiness. Can I give a stronger reason for loving it?"

"You would make any one love it," observed I, "as I am sure you have me; though, if ambition be honourable, which we are told it is, the ambitious man can never be a votary; there is not room for him in solitude."

"For mere worldly ambition," said he, "by which I mean a struggle after power, preferment, or riches, certainly not. All this must be laid aside, or the recluse is a gone man. For what does the wise man say? 'ambition is like choler, which is an humour, that maketh men active, earnest, full of alacrity, and stirring, if it be not stopt. But *if it be stopt*, and cannot have its way, it becometh adust, and thereby *maligne* and *venomous*.'"

"Now if a man continues ambitious in solitude, the humour is stopt, and the, then wise man, adds he, becomes secretly discontent, looks upon men and matters with an evil eye, and is best pleased when things go backward'. Bacon, however, neglects a corollary which he might have added to this, that public men, when out of office, if they have the least *hankering* left, should never betake themselves to solitude for consolation, for they will certainly then *become adust*, and 'best pleased when things go backward.'"

"But what, may I ask," said I, "is to secure them from the hankering you have mentioned?"

He answered, "The objects for which alone they ought to retire. If their seclusion be adopted in a pet, as it often is; if from caprice, if without sufficient stores, heaven help the hermit, for he cannot help himself, but will sink down into a gross and unworthy sensualist; or, at very best, a listless burthen to himself and all about him."

"I should like, however, to hear more," said I, "of those worthier and higher pursuits in solitude, which, according to its admirers, so ennoble it."

"Look around you," he answered, "and if you cannot there find both employment and interest for a hundred lives, I have thrown away my pains and money on my library to no purpose. You must, however, often impose upon yourself the subjects you see around you, as duties, not as mere amusement. Science and philosophy must be your substantials; light summer reading only the garnish. If you adopt this plan, perhaps, you would wish the day longer than it is, even in solitude. But, woe to that day, if you confine your reading to trifles: for I need not remind you,

¹ Bacon's Essays. Art. 'Ambition.'

‘ Si non
Intendes animum studiis et rebus honestis,
Invidiâ vel amore vigil torquebere ¹. ’

So says Horace.

‘ Loquor de docto homine et erudito, cui vivere est cogitare ². ’

So says Cicero.

‘ But the first and noblest occupation of solitude is also its happiest, being no less than nature, and nature’s God.’

“On this part of the subject Zimmerman shines; and one who wrote before him, and quite as well, if not better.”

With this, Mr. Manners took *Hervey’s Meditations* from one of the shelves.

“Start not,” said he, “at my introducing this quaint old author to you, whom, perhaps, you young Oxonians never read, or despise if you do. Rest assured, however, that in this fanciful, but most devoted Christian, there is more, both of genius and poetry, than in any of the correct and smooth, but soul-less gentry of the present age.”

Mr. Manners then turned to the *Contemplation on Night*, and read:—“The world is a troubled ocean, and who can erect stable purposes on its troubled waves? The world is a school of wrong, and who does not feel himself warping to its pernicious influences? On this sea of glass, how insensibly we slide from our own steadfastness? Some sacred truth, which was struck in lively characters on our souls is obscured, if not obliterated. Some worthy resolution, which heaven had wrought in our breasts, is shaken, if not overthrown. Some enticing vanity, *which we had solemnly renounced*, again practises its wiles. *How often has an angry glance kindled a fever in our hearts? How often has a word of applause dropt luscious poison in our ears, or some disrespectful expression raised a gust of passion in our bosom?* Our innocence is of so tender a constitution, that it suffers in the crowd; our purity of so delicate a complexion, that it scarce touches on the world without contracting a stain. We see, we hear with peril.”

“To me,” said I, on Mr. Manners pausing, “however forcible and eloquent, this is new; and I shall begin to think myself like the *bourgeois gentilhomme*, who had talked prose all his life without knowing it; for I find I have been living amid danger and corruption with equal ignorance.”

¹ ‘ Unless you light your early lamp to find
A moral book; unless you form your mind
To nobler studies, you shall forfeit rest;
And love or envy shall distract your breast.’

FRANCIS’ HOR. Ep. 1, 2, 3, 7.

² ‘ I speak of a learned, well-instructed man, with whom to think is to live.’

“Your age,” replied Mr. Manners gravely, “exempt you, I trust, from that suspicion. You have, in fact, been scarcely in the world we are talking of; but to me the picture is no more than just, both as to men and women. How many are there of either, who ever seriously reflect upon what they are about, or what they are pursuing, except that it is pleasure, or business, or an object of ambition? They seem all meteors, streaming on the troubled air, without knowing where they are to rest, and, provided they shine, perfectly content. Who of all who meet daily at White’s, or Brooks’s, or at the levée, or at dinners, or the Opera, or the House, ever think of what their nature, their hearts, or their God require of them; satisfied if they shock not the customs of society by very gross faults, which would drive them from it, but totally indifferent as to the rewards of conscience or of self-approbation? Is there one of these who ever, during this career, lifts his thoughts to heaven, or thinks of conversing with his God? Is not the sole and absorbing topic (that which has the ascendant for the moment), whose dinner is best, how best to shine in a society of fashionables, how to keep a place, or how turn out the ministers?”

“If you reproach them with this, far from disputing it, or even defending themselves from the attack, they will be indifferent to its truth, and coolly reply, ‘*defendit numerus.*’ Not one of these can say with the Psalmist, ‘I pour out my heart by myself;’ not one communes with that heart in his chamber and is still.”

I protested, what was true, my incapacity to judge of all this, but Mr. Manners saying it, I told him I would take it for granted, and suppose Hervey was right in what he said of the world.

“Be assured then,” he continued, “he is equally right in what he says of solitude as a contrast;—and he read on:—‘Here safety dwells. Every meddling and intrusive avocation is secluded. Silence holds the door against the strife of tongues, and all the impertinences of idle conversation. The busy swarm of vain images and cajoling temptations, which beset us with a buzzing importunity amidst the gaieties of life, are chased by these thickening shades. Here I may, without disturbance, commune with my own heart, and learn the best of sciences, to know *myself*. Here the soul may rally her dissipated powers, *and grace recover its native energy*. This is the *opportunity* to rectify every evil impression; to expel the poison and guard against the contagion of corrupting examples. This is the place where I may with advantage apply myself to subdue the rebel *within*, and be master, not of a sceptre, but of *myself*. Throng then, ye ambitious, the levées of the powerful; *I* will be punctual in my assignation with solitude. To a mind *intent upon its own improvement*, solitude has charms incomparably more engaging than the entertainments of a theatre or the honours of a drawing-room. I said solitude! But am I then alone?’

“A solemn question,” observed Manners, “to which he gives a solemn and awful answer, for he says, and says truly, that ‘God and his angels are always with him, in him, and about him.’ And this, in fact, is the real advantage of solitude, particularly in the country, that it every where prompts reflections as to nature and its author, which cannot find place in towns. Walton would never have been what he was, but for his country walks : they made every thing to look gladness and health, and beat all that the most costly art ever effected. He who can properly enjoy them, has really the

‘*Vita solutorum miserâ ambitione gravique.*’ ”

I felt this to be equally true and affecting, particularly when my companion went on :—

“Can any man, thinking thus of the world, and his retreat from it, ever feel that retreat irksome or vacant? There are moments, indeed, worth a thousand pounds, when, free from bodily complaint, mental uneasiness, or mental fear, in love with God, and in charity with man, we feel an exuberant felicity which we cannot define, but which makes us pour out our souls in genuine thanksgiving.

“Such moments, however,” continued he, “belong not to the inhabitants of the club-room or the denizen of office ; they come but to those who live in part, at least, a contemplative life, and much alone ; and such is the sweetest charm, as well as the most valuable property, of the solitude we are discussing. For such a person, thus fitted for it, though he appear the idlest and most unoccupied of men, is in fact the most busy ; his body may seem a fixture, but his thoughts, his interests, are all in motion. He has a mute but observing eye, seemingly bent on vacancy, but no vacancy to him ; for he will see, within the mere walls of his room, the whole perhaps of the peopled earth, from the beginning of time, passing in review before his intellect ; he will meditate on the nature and history of man and particularly on his own, in which he will discover a thousand minute traits which had escaped him in the world. If good, he will rejoice in them ; if bad, he will amend them ; and thus, though he stir not for hours from the fire in winter, or a garden bench in summer, yet is not his time misspent.”

My instructor said this with an unction that proved his sincerity, and only made the picture more impressive. It is certain I felt my veneration for him increase at every word he spoke, and I was, however alive to the sound, sorry when a most deep-toned bell from the top of the house, and echoed from the woodland below, announced that dinner was on the table.

CHAPTER II.

OF THE GOOD DINNER WHICH SOLITUDE MAY FURNISH TO THOSE WHO CAN AFFORD IT,
AND THE FURTHER HISTORY OF MR. MANNERS.

We have a trifling, foolish banquet toward.

SHAKSPEARE.—*Romeo and Juliet*.

OUR repast was *simplex munditiis*; unless the beautiful Sevre in which the viands, and the fine old Dresden in which the dessert were served, might be said to savour a little more of magnificence than neatness.

Be that as it will, it is the property of elegance always to please, and as nothing forbade it here, I own I allowed myself to enjoy all that it is so calculated to add to the usual attraction of an excellent dinner. There was an exquisite soup; the promised chicken was most savoury, and done to a turn; and claret like a ruby, and foaming Saint Peray, which my host dealt out liberally from an embossed silver ice-pail, crowned the feast.

Much as I was occupied, I could not help contrasting the scene with that in the kitchen of the Jolly Angler, and at the Ordinary of the Royal Oak; and I thought, and began to believe, my new-found cousin and preceptor agreed with me in thinking that the simplicities of nature were not incompatible with the luxuries of art, particularly at dinner-time.

If ever the *molliora tempora fandi* prevail, it is at a good dinner; and it was upon the want of it that Coriolanus's friend Menenius laid the blame of all his faults with the mob:—

“He had not dined;

The veins unfilled, our blood is cold, and then

We pout upon the morning.”

Heaven knows, there was here no pouting; for, exclusive of the banquet before us, to which Mr. Manners did as much justice as myself, our different conversations had excited the good humour of us both: mine, from having witnessed such cultivated talents in my host; his, for having so well exercised them.

One reason more, in regard to myself, was the secret satisfaction I felt in the so unexpected discovery of my relationship to him, and the frank good-will with which he acknowledged it. This was repeated several times; for he never replenished his glass but he called me cousin, and wished our better acquaintance.

Of what might be the consequence of this, I had no precise, or indeed any idea; but I felt a sort of secret consciousness of something good that time might reveal, the nature of which was confused

but flattering (thanks to my sanguine temper), nor could I prevent a favourable vision of the world from rising in the distance to my view.

My reverie of a minute, upon this subject, when the departure of the servants left us to our wine and fruit, was interrupted by my host, who observed,

“ We talked before dinner of the force of early associations, to which, perhaps, from the few trifling instances I gave of them, you thought me a votary. What will you say when I tell you that it is to them I owe my being here—to the abandonment of a very different and much finer place in the north ? ”

“ I heard,” said I “ from the omniscient Gayford, that you preferred this, because you were born and bred here, to some fine seat you had elsewhere. ”

“ He was no more than right,” replied Mr. Manners. “ Black-down Castle, in Bolton-le-Moors, would look upon this with contempt, and I believe I am not a little despised, by men of supposed high minds, for having left it so soon to itself. What is worse, by the charitable world (which always sits in judgment upon other people’s motions, though ever so ignorant of them), I was summoned, tried, and found guilty of miserly stinginess, in leaving it for this less expensive, but happier abode. It was impossible, they said, for any one to be so swayed by the force of habit, or attachment to the scenes of his youth, as to prefer what they called a cottage, in comparison to a feudal castle. I ventured to dissent from their opinions. ”

“ And your residence here since, of course confirmed that dissent ? ”

“ It did,” said he ; “ for, say what one will of the attractions of grandeur and the enjoyments of wealth, one beat of the heart, occasioned by any fond or happy recollection inspired by either sight or sound, will make magnificence sink to nothing in the comparison. This old-fashioned, moated grange was the seat of my fathers ; a fair and comfortable provision for the younger branches of any family, however high. My mother, who, though an earl’s daughter, and ultimate heiress, was a model of moderation and unspoiled benevolence, made it the seat of happiness to all that belonged to her. It is true, the house is moderate, and near the road, and I approached the castle through an avenue half a mile long. There were there, also, gilded domes, walls painted *alfresco*, and numerous, though not over-convenient apartments within doors ; while herds of deer coursed an extended park without. In short, it was magnificent when you got to it ; but you had to traverse full five-and-twenty miles of the most odious, bleak, and dreary moors (whence the district took its name), to reach it. It was sunk in a vast dell, and surrounded closely by groves of black pine, the arms of which, like those of witches, seemed at the same time to embrace and blast you

with damp and mildew. It made me think myself a Caliban tormented by Prospero, racked with cramps, and all my bones filled with aches."

"In truth," said I, "the very description makes me shiver, and I am not surprised at the exchange."

"Why, without such a character as I have given it," answered he, "I believe I should have done the same; for it came to me too late. My uncle, Lord Badlesmere, died when I was long past forty; my tenants *depended* upon me, but could not *love* me. How should they? They never knew me when either they or I were in our youth, which brings all ranks together. I had never been at the place; it had not a single association like those which my heart loves to feel, while this comfortable grange was full of them. It was here I first loved a garden; here I first learned to read; here was first taught there was a God; here knew him in every tree and every flower that surrounded me. In that rivulet I first bathed; in that field mounted my first pony; in that copse first heard the nightingale."

"I think," said I, "you need not go on to account for your preference, or even your exchange."

"It was some time, however," continued he, "before I found out exactly what ailed me at Bolton-le-Moors. My name gave me a little feudal pride, and it promised to be amply gratified by the possession of the castle. I felt comparatively a grandee, yet I was not happy, and little imagined it was because I was too great. I passed my hours in gloomy magnificence, and all the worse for the want of that golden mediocrity which Horace talks of. I had no *necessity* for the employment which made all my little occupations at the grange so sweet. Every thing was done for me, and my servants seemed ashamed of me if I did any thing for myself. I revelled in company at home and abroad; for all my uncle's friends made a point of shewing their respect for his memory, by treating me as they did him—that is, never leaving me alone; and I soon found that, though I was lord of a castle, I had not the felicity of a home. I wanted those hours of the early morning, which, from the meditations they inspire, colour the whole day with cheerfulness. I wanted the freshness of the flowers which I myself had reared; the retired shades which I myself had planted: these always gave my mind composure. Would you believe it, too, that the first proof I had of how much I had lost by the exchange was the missing the children of the village flocking past my windows, just after milking time in the morning, with their cans and pitchers for the skimmed milk, which my mother always gave away? The sight was ever exhilarating, and the day all the better for it."

"But why," said I, "could not this be enjoyed at the castle as well as in the village?"

"In the first place, because there was no village, and conse-

quently no children. A landscape gardener, with much taste and no benevolence, had persuaded Lord Badlesmere to pull down the whole hamlet, where their ancestors and his had been reared together for two centuries with mutual benefit. In the next, I had become so much richer than my mother at the grange, that this little milk donation, being like so much water, gave me none of that self-satisfaction, though small, which one feels in giving up something to the wants of another. Besides, to admit a parcel of little paupers so near so noble a residence disturbed the ideas of respect due to my lord's gentleman, if not to my lord himself; and all such were chased away, either by the dogs or the stable-boys, who had orders to that effect."

I loved my host for these sentiments.

"Still, however," said I, "you could not be in a desert, as you revelled, you say, in company."

"*Hinc illæ lacrymæ*," returned he. "Though I thought the only good of those eternal moors would be to keep off visitors, not only that failed, but I was forced to return the visits. Oh, the yawns and shiverings I have had while counting the minutes, I may say the hours, which it took me to cross them; for there being no intervening post-houses, my horses were obliged to drag me slowly along; and when I got to the promised land, and was plunged into what I sought, the society of my country neighbours, as they were called, though thirty, and some of them forty miles off—alas! tell it not in Gath—the very thought of it makes me yawn at this distance of time."

Here he suited the action to the word so emphatically, that I burst out a-laughing, and could hardly ask him what there was in the recollection that so moved him.

"You," replied he, "who have had the good fortune to be unacquainted with any but the natural tone and manners of those of your own age, and of the same pursuits, can scarce imagine the torrent of dulness and constraint which you will sometimes be doomed to meet with in what is called society. You yet know nothing of *ennui*. But of all society, deliver me from that which presses you to earth in the country; from which there is no escape, and which you are bound by convention to undergo in a remote county. In town, you may choose; near town, you may shut yourself up if you please; nobody will mind you. There are enough, and to spare. But at Bolton-le-Moors——"

"O! pray, let us have it," said I, seeing him stop.

"Why, I told you," proceeded he, "that in settling there, though, as it were, obliged to do so, I found I had made a mistake, and exchanged real and natural, though homely interests, for glare, vanity, and complaisance, amounting indeed to flattery, but which was too artificial to do the heart good. All the country

came to see me, and I drove a-visiting in my coach and six to all the country. I received and gave two or three courses at dinner; I ate off plate, and my plate was admired. For all this, except when warmed with wine or politics, nothing hung so heavily as our dinners; and as for our evenings, they were dulness personified. A boarding-house at Bath could not be worse. Now and then a pretty Hebe of a girl would shew some nature; that is, as much as she dared. Her eyes would sparkle with what pleasure she could get, and I rejoiced at seeing natural cheerfulness; but for one quarter of an hour of this, there were two whole hours of flatness. The watches were out every ten minutes; the coachman had certainly made a mistake; and the moment of separation was the only pleasant one of the meeting."

"And yet you were here among those of your own rank, station, and fortune?"

"Yes; they were, as Pope describes his country friends to Wycherley, 'a sort of modest, inoffensive people, who neither have sense, nor pretend to any, but enjoy a jovial sort of dulness. They are commonly known in the world by the name of honest, civil gentlemen.' Yes; there were Sir Harry, and my lord, and half-a-dozen of my ladies; but then they (particularly my ladies) were out of their element in a country drawing-room. There were no interests where there was nobody to court, no turn to serve. The men could not continue to talk politics, or fox-hunting, or yeomanry, after they had left the dining-room; and the women, after they had surveyed each other's dresses, and mentally sat in judgment upon the expense or taste which each had displayed, were quite done. Nor was this relieved by, for the most part, very bad music. Never shall I forget the torture I suffered from the constant repetition of that exquisite piece of tedious flatness, even when well sung,

'Angels ever bright and fair.'

Here it was intolerable, yet called for in every party, and once, to my consternation, encored by a man of ten thousand a-year, who could not be refused. Heaven forgive me! I have hated him ever since. It was only when the old people got to cards, or the young ones, after a thousand abortive attempts, got really into a quadrille (in which dulness still pursued them), that the time seemed to get on. At all other times these social parties gave me the idea of the Dutchman, who, making a great noise by jumping over the chairs, and being asked what he meant by it, answered with great *naïveté*, '*J'apprends à être vif.*'"

This produced a hearty laugh on my part; indeed the whole description was ludicrous, though given in solemn sadness.

"All this," he proceeded, "often repeated, became at last a serious misfortune; the distance from neighbours protracted per-

force, with many of them, all visits for two or three days, and I found that to have five-and-twenty miles of moors between us did any thing but make Blackdown Castle come up to La Bruyère's idea of a solitude, '*Repos, retraite, et un endroit qui soit son domaine.*' On the contrary, I felt twenty times a-day that my whistling ploughman might say to me,

‘ A simple, rustic home of liberty
Is worth your honours in captivity.’

“ In fine, I discovered that the life I was leading suited not even my fortune, much less my habits; for my Lord Badlesmere, with less income than befitted an earl, had lived like a duke, and left me a revenue very disproportionate to the place. I gladly, therefore, returned to this my ‘rustic home of liberty,’ where I enjoy what, after all the vicissitudes of what is thought good fortune, is among the purest and most real sources of happiness, ‘*Sibi posse vivere, et Musis, et cum paucis non fallacibus amicis, in agelli angulo, consenescere*’¹. ”

Here he ceased, and the Dutchman, who was learning *à être vif*, at which I had indulged a laugh, was forgotten in the seriousness with which these last sentences were uttered. The story and the bottle were now ended, and coffee coming in, put an end for the present to our pleasant conversation.

The after-dinner stroll now came on, for Manners was one of the first who had emancipated himself from the custom, so subversive of all good-feeling and all rational enjoyment, which in those days prevailed, of exciting, and therefore deteriorating both the mind and constitution by more wine than nature required. We talk of our good old forefathers! Surely they were good old brutes, worshippers of the baneful cup of Comus,

“ Whose pleasing poison
The visage quite transforms of him who drinks,
And the inglorious likeness of a beast
Fixes instead, unmoulding reason's mintage.”

We talk of modern amusements, rail-roads and steam—how far more beneficial to our happiness is the improvement in our manners, which makes it now a reproach instead of a glory for a gentleman to be drunk.

It was not yet quite evening (for fifty years ago we did not dine at eight o'clock in the country), but the sun was approaching his final declension:

‘ Et jam summa procul villarum culmina fumant:
Majoresque cadunt altis de montibus umbræ’². ”

¹ ‘To be able to live to one's self, and in the corner of one's farm grow old in the cultivation of the Muses and a few sincere friends.’

² “And now in the distance the cottage chimneys begin to smoke, and a lengthened shade falls from the lofty hills.”

The air was balmy, and the scent of the flowers seemed to perfectionate our sensual enjoyments. We had approached the opening into the fields, where half-a-dozen beautiful cows were winding in a waving line from the milking byre to their night pasture, and made the air resound with their lowing.

My classical host, after contemplating them a few minutes, broke out with—

“Aut in reducta valle mugientium
Prospectat errantes greges.”

“This,” said he, “is the most soothing time of the day, and this the most soothing of sights. It gives you the idea of a delicious plenty afforded by nature, accompanied with independence and perfect innocence, insuring rest and tranquillity. How happy when the evening of life resembles it.”

“It is superior to the morning,” said I, “in pleasurable sensations.”

“Not quite,” observed he, smiling; “for content as I am with my evening, I perhaps should have no objection to a little of your youth. And yet I am not sure; for one would not willingly go out again to sea when the haven is in sight. I am not a Lord Ligonier.”

I asked his allusion, and he told me that Lord Ligonier, when at eighty, found himself still a man of pleasure, and was asked for promotion by his relation, the present General Lascelles. “I am three-and-twenty,” said Lascelles, “and yet I am but a cornet.” “Be thankful, you young dog,” said Ligonier. “I am Commander-in-chief, but would change with you to-morrow.” “Now this I am not prepared to say, even to you.”

“I don’t know why you should,” said I, “for you seem the picture of happiness, and deserve to be so. Virgil, in the eclogue you quoted just now, must certainly have seen you and this retreat in a vision, when he wrote the lines,

‘Fortunate senex, ergo tua rura manebunt;
Fortunate senex, hic inter flumina nota,
Et fontes sacros, frigus captabis opacum.’¹”

Mr. Manners nodded his head, and seemed by no means ill-pleased with the allusion.

“I know not,” said he, “if I have a right to be addressed by the epithet of Fortunatus; but if a capability, in my old age, of enjoying such a scene as this, and being alive in a summer evening to the pleasures of sacred fountains and the cool shade, will justify the appellation, perhaps it may belong to me. The situation, prospects, hopes, and fears of an old man, particularly in reference to

¹ ‘Fortunate old man, whose farm is preserved to you, and who, amidst your well-known streams and sacred fountains, enjoyest the cool shade.’

and comparison with youth, have not, as you may suppose, passed unexamined by me."

"The result," said I, "must be edifying, and much I doubt if you, at least, can justify the character of

'Strict age and sour severity.'"

"Thanking you for the compliment," returned he, "I know not if that character is a fair one, for it is our own fault if we are not as happy as you; though the happiness of youth, from the exuberance, nay, the riot of its hopes, is so great, that if we had not even still richer, though not such riotous hope, there would be no sort of comparison between us. With this richer hope, I would not yield you one jot of happiness more than a healthy old man might enjoy."

"This is very charming," said I, "and I quite long to be enlightened on so interesting a subject."

"Why, it is not," replied he, "the loss of youth, in regard to its sensual enjoyments, that forms the regrets of old age; for the latter may have quite as much positive enjoyment as the former."

Seeing me look surprised, "Nay, start not," said he, "for I must tell you what perhaps you must be old before you know. Quiet, rest, and tranquillity, are quite as happy, if not happier things than excitement. It is the less and less prospect of the happiness continuing that embitters the last years of those who are quitting the world, *if they have no consolation in doing so*. Could a man of seventy, at ease in body and mind, look forward to fifty years more in the same condition he is in, as you young men do, (though far from being sure of it), he would be quite as happy, perhaps happier, in his arm-chair, than you in a fox chase."

"Rather a tame sort of happiness," said I.

"But still happiness," answered he, "and of the most demonstrable kind. For, let me ask you, in your late journeys on foot, how many miles did you make in a day?"

"Sometimes twenty."

"And when you came to your inn of an evening, what did you do?"

"Nothing, for I was too tired, and sought repose."

"Just so; and you found that the repose of doing nothing after a long journey was a great pleasure. So says Milton:

'Refreshment after toil, ease after pain.'"

"I see what you mean," said I.

"I am glad of it," replied he, "for you now see that my arm-chair in the evening of life is as great a pleasure as your evening repose after a long day's journey. But even in youth, healthy existence—that is, a tranquil enjoyment of it in the simple act of breath-

ing—is (thanks to Him who so ordained it!) positive enjoyment, and in itself enough. Besides, as I once heard one old man, an ex-cabinet minister, say to another, who was lamenting that there was nothing left in the world worth enjoying,—‘You forget that we can eat our dinners and sleep on our beds.’

“Of the efficiency of one of these sources you will perhaps need no conviction, after what you witnessed in me two hours ago. This I own is rather unsentimental; but add to it what I am supposing in the case, the power of meditation, reading, and agreeable conversation, and do not flatter yourself that an old man is not as happy as a young one. If he has fewer desires, he has fewer mortifications, for most innocent nature never meant

‘As if her children should be riotous with her abundance.’”

“All that is beautifully true,” observed I; “but are we wrong in supposing that there are evils peculiar to old age,

‘The lean and slipper’d pantaloon,
The hose, a world too wide for his shrunk shank?’

“But I will not go on, except indeed that I recollect a denunciation of old age by Rousseau, which cannot offend *you*, at least, who are greatly too far off it to be affected by it.”

“O! even if I were not,” said he, “by all means let us have it.”

I hesitated a little; but, urged by him, at length repeated,

“Vieux, on le méprise, on l’évite,
Mauvaise humeur, infirmité,
Toux, gravelle, goutte, pituite,
Assiégent sa caducité.”

Far from taking this ill, it moved his laughter.

“And pray,” said he, “thou representative of most immaculate and unimpeachable youth, do not the world despise and avoid empty young coxcombs, who bore you with their self-sufficient and boisterous spirits, as well as languishing old men? Are you never in bad humour? Have you no infirmities? no coughs, gravel, or even gout? I reject this monopoly of disease and ill-humour by age; though I grant you the other terrors are too faithfully described; not only the ‘shrunk shank,’ but ‘the big manly voice, turning again towards childish treble pipes;’ and even the ‘second childishness,’

‘Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans every thing.’

“Yet these last, by making us wish for death, would reconcile us to it; and even these last do not proscribe mind. These, however, are extreme cases, for seldom indeed do all these privations befall one individual, and leave him without any resources. Perhaps the resources left have even heightened enjoyments to make up for

what is lost. Take my own example. God has taken away something, but has left me more. I am deaf, but I might have been blind. I cannot hear the blackbird, but I can enjoy this ample prospect, as much, or more than ever. I cannot walk twenty miles a-day, as you do ; but I can sit on a bench, and, better than you (because I feel it more), feel and adore the sun.

“My gratitude for this is not only greater, as it ought to be, when I consider what I might be, but is of a more exquisite and warmer nature, and therefore makes me happier than the feelings upon it of a youth, who, seeing how common it is, looks upon it as a right. Be assured the frame of mind which old age thus generates, alone balances, nay, more than balances, all the gay carelessness of youth.

“Let me return then to that with which I set out, and which alone I hold as a set-off against youth ; I mean a healthy old age, unburthened by conscience, having honourable retrospections, and alive to mental cheerfulness. With these, an old man need envy no young one.

“One evil there is, I grant you, and that a severe one. The loss of friends, together with the prospect of being soon lost one’s self. But besides that no young age can be insured against this, even here is consolation in hope—the hope of living again, and in a better world joining the loved beings who have gone before us. I thank God that, far from having parted with this hope, it has increased with my years, and in the indulgence of it I wait with calmness the approach of the ‘inaudible and noiseless foot of Time.’ ”

I could not, and indeed wished not, to reply to this, for I felt both its force and its pathos.

A pause ensued, which, from its solemnity neither of us seemed inclined to interrupt, till, warming with his last sentiment, he asked me if I had ever seen some beautiful lines of Hughes, which he said should be written in letters of gold :

“There let Time’s creeping winter shed
His reverend snow around my head ;
And while I feel by fast degrees
My sluggard blood wax chill and freeze,
Let thought unveil to my fix’d eye
A scene of deep eternity,
Till, life dissolving at the view,
I wake, and find the vision true.”

CHAPTER III.

OF A VERY INTERESTING SUGGESTION MADE BY MR. MANNERS TO CLIFFORD.—HOW GLADLY HE RECEIVED, AND HOW SOON HE FORGOT IT, IN CONTEMPLATING THE MOON.

“How sweet the moonlight sleeps upon this bank.”

In such a night Medea gathered the enchanted herbs that did recover old Æson.

SHAKSPEARE.—*Merchant of Venice*.

AT the close of our conversation in the last chapter, a servant announced tea in the library, and I suppose I looked surprised, as there were no ladies in the house and Manners had not ordered it; so he thought it necessary to explain.

“I see,” said he, “your wonder at this: but it is only one other accompaniment of the solitary life. For where we are not bound to take note of time by any superior demand upon it, unless we make one for ourselves, the machine would run down of itself. The terms *soon* and *late* would be lost, and the hours of the house would run wild. This I found after I finally settled myself here, in the sort of *robe de chambre* life I lead. The robe would never be off my back, if there was not a regular order of things, and times for doing them. At first, the cook, the butler, the groom, never knew where to have me, nor I them; so I drew up a code of laws for our common government; the time of all meals, for all persons, was enacted, and exactly kept to; and since that we have done pretty well. I am quizzed for this, too, among other things, by my charitable neighbours, who sneer at me as a bore of an old man, who moves by clockwork. I answer, I wish their lives were half as regular as my clock. So now you see why we have been summoned to tea, and why I dare not disobey; all which, whether you approve or disapprove, you may put down to the account of Solitude.”

“I shall be an adept, I have no doubt, at last,” said I.

“An adept as to theory, if you will, but not in practice. You must put off that to this time forty years.”

This not unnaturally led to inquiries as to my professional views; “for, undoubtedly,” said he, “you must have some; though I suppose, from your Sedbergh exhibition at Queen’s, and your election afterwards to Maudlin, they are clerical; a college tutor and a country parson, like your master, Folthergill; but, heavens! how that man was thrown away.”

“He does not think so himself,” observed I; “nor do I believe he would have been half so happy in the actual world, much as he knows of its theory. He failed, you know, in endeavouring to become a politician under Lord Castleton.”

“He did so; though Castleton both loved and respected him; but he had not the *esprit liant*. I trust you will not imitate him in that.”

“You know Lord Castleton, then?”

“Yes, full well; for not only am I his near relation through the Badlesmeres, but when I was in the world we were great political friends. He was one of the few whom I really believed honest in his ambition; and he used to say I was one of the few who was sincere in my love of privacy. He sometimes writes to me, and more than once has unbent for four-and-twenty hours at a time at the Grange. By the way, I wish you knew him. He has often complained to me that he never could attach a young man of parts to his service, for his own sake; or who did not acquire such a vast opinion of himself, that he was forced to dismiss him in his own defence. Do you know, it has already struck me, once or twice, in the course of our conversations, that you would just suit him. You are well born, which he likes; well-looking, which he likes; and *ingenui vultus puer*, which he very much likes. Your romance and your sentiment would be no drawback, for he once had them himself; and your apparent scholarship would be an additional recommendation, for he not only had, but retains, a considerable portion of literature to this day.”

I was absolutely bewildered during this speech. I could not believe my new-found kinsman in earnest: my colour came and went; and Fothergill's suggestions to the same effect rushing into my mind, I became dizzy with the thousand notions which, thus repeated, they engendered.

Mr. Manners seeing me agitated, asked the cause of it; and having recovered myself, I fairly told him my surprise at the extraordinary coincidence between him and Fothergill upon this point.

“Surprising, but not displeasing, I trust,” said he.

“Very far from it,” replied I, “if I were only worthy of it. But obscure, ignorant of the world, particularly of the high world, its manners, maxims, and conventions; what would become of me? and even if your unaccountable sudden feeling of favour towards me, which I know not how I can have acquired——”

“O!” interrupted he; “truce with your modesty here, at least, though it might become you in the presence of a perhaps jealous patron. As to your obscurity, a demy of Maudlin, with the prospect of a fellowship, belongs absolutely to *noblesse*; and such obscurity as Addison set out with cannot be very detrimental. Then you are a De Clifford and a Bardolfe:

“A noble young fellow three ages ago.”

Last and not least, you will please to observe, you are my first cousin, only three or four times removed. The devil's in it, should Castleton have a vacancy in his *bureau*, if he would fill it obscurely

in choosing you. I must only lay my wits together with Fothergill's, to see how to bring it about."

Then, seeing that I was still agitated, and that the evening was fast closing in, he said, "There, I have spoiled your contemplative walk home to-night, notwithstanding that rising moon, which will make me envy you the chequered shade she will cause in Asher's Wood. But go, and enjoy it if you can, notwithstanding the dream of the world I have raised in you. I suppose you will feel a little like Gil Blas, after hearing the momentous words—'You now belong to the king!' But love the moon, notwithstanding: think of what I have told you, and pray dine with me again to-morrow."

At these words he playfully almost pushed me out of the room, and, as I passed the open window, called out, "If you hear any bells, though only a sheep-bell, in your way home, think of one Whittington, and that they cry,

' Turn again, Whittington,
Lord Mayor of London town.' "

With this prophetic distich in my ears, I certainly, at first, thought much of London town; but the dream did not last long. For though, for the first two or three hundred yards, my fancy conjured up many visions of the interesting novelties of public life, it was scarcely possible for them to continue in the pastoral village of Binfield.

The bean-flowers, that richest and sweetest of scents, which here flourished in profusion, and perhaps gave its name to the village, again perfumed the air, and filled all the senses with a soothing voluptuousness wholly incompatible with dreams of ambition. It was impossible to think of courts in such a garden.

The day, too, had for some time sunk, and given place to what has well been called, "a universal gravity." Twilight herself seemed departing, and the gleams of her silver tints, after having lingered a minute on the higher objects, as if to claim a last farewell, dropt suddenly from the sight, and were gone almost as soon as seen.

There was a moral in this which effectually banished worldly desires; for it made me reflect how uncertain is our hold on all we may most love.

I gave way therefore to holier aspirations; and forgot Lord Castleton and his *bureau* in far different and higher speculations.

And now the moon had begun to array herself in melting softness. Was it possible for the mind to dwell upon artificial grandeur, or any power belonging to man, under such surpassing proofs of creative splendour in the Omnipotent? No heart could resist its influence; and mine forgot this lower world, in thinking of His power and beneficence who dwelt above.

What made the scene more rich and seductive, was the gradual majestic advance of this all-diffusing orb, from faint beginnings to the wide-spreading influence of universal brightness. For at first, scarce seen in the horizon, the effect upon surrounding objects was not so great, and the hemisphere remained for a while only just visible. But soon rising higher and higher, she shot forth all her glories,

“ Firing the proud tops of the eastern pines.”

This made me, her worshipper, bow down, senseless to any influence but her own; for while the whole vault of heaven was cloudless, every ray told upon the surrounding landscape, and I never so much felt the exact as well as sublime description of him who excelled in sublimity and exactness :—

“ Now Heav’n in all her glory shone, and roll’d
Her motions as the great first mover’s hand
First wheel’d her course ; earth in her rich attire
Consummate, lovely, smiled.”

No; I could not think of Lord Castleton, fearing, if I did so, heaven and earth would rebuke me for my selfishness.

And yet with all this rapture (for it was no less) in regard to this lovely planet, I somehow or another felt a want for her. She seemed too dependent upon another, whose deputy only she was, when I would have had her a queen, with power self-derived. She seemed also *alone*, and to feel that she was so. Peerless, as she rode through the boundless ether, I wished to give her a companion. She appeared a widow, or an orphan, or both. The happiness she diffused to others seemed wanting to herself.

These thoughts possessed me so much, that I invoked the Muse upon them, and before I got to Oakingham, they had arranged themselves in some stanzas, which perhaps I might venture to record, but that long—long since they were composed, the same thought was embodied by a superior genius, whose premature and most affecting death has enhanced the interest of all her productions¹. Among the sweetest of them is the sonnet I allude to, which the reader may pass over if he pleases ; but if he reads it, I think he will thank me.

SONNET TO THE MOON.

The moon is sailing o’er the sky,
But *lonely* all, as if she pined
For something of companionship,
And felt it was in *vain* she shined.

Earth is her mirror, and the stars
Are as a court around her throne ;
She is a beauty, and a queen,
But what of that ? she is *alone*.

¹ L. E. L.

Is there not one, not one to share
 Thy glorious royalty on high?
 I cannot choose but pity thee,
 Thou lovely orphan of the sky.

I'd rather be the meanest flow'r
 That grows, my mother earth, on thee,
 So there were others of my kin
 To blossom, bloom, and die with me.

Earth, thou hast sorrow, grief, and death,
 But with these better could I bear,
 Than guide and rule yon radiant sphere,
 And be a *solitary* there.

With such reflections as these, in which perhaps there was a tinge of melancholy, though not unpleasing, I traversed the dewy lawns and still woods (too still, for it was too late in the year for the nightingale) that lay between Binfield and Oakingham. What they wanted in melody, however, they endeavoured to make up in freshness, which was emitted from every leaf and every tuft and wild-flower which spread itself to the influence of the soft night air. The effect upon the nerves was perfect, and when I saw the lights and buildings of Oakingham, I felt displeased, for they took me back to the world.

Yet I soon remembered that for that world I was destined; and the Royal Oak, where a weekly club still lingered, after a market-day, made me forget my romance; and the bells of the church, on which the ringers, according to good old English custom, were exercising their skill, in I don't know how many bob majors, made me recollect, though without superstition, the allusion of Mr. Manners to—"Turn again, Whittington."

Having got me to bed, I gave myself up to serious reflection on the (to me) strange events of the day;—the discovery of my relationship to Mr. Manners, acknowledged by him in so frank and flattering a manner that it was incontestable; the accomplished mind of that gentleman; his great and sudden favour towards me, and the extraordinary prospect he held forth as the possible result of it with Lord Castleton—all this made me resolve to write in detail to Fothergill, and shortly to my family. My bosom swelled with hope, and I fell into a sound and happy sleep, from which I did not wake for several hours.

The next day I executed my purpose, by giving my *quondam* tutor the whole history of my rencontre with his friend, and my obligations to that friendship in procuring me originally so much of his notice. I then detailed the wonder of our discovered connection; Mr. Manners' increased kindness in consequence; and, finally, the hope he had held out of some benefit which, with his (Fothergill's) assistance, it might procure for me with Lord Castleton.

From foreseeing that I should have to break in considerably upon the plan of my pedestrian tour, I wrote also to the person who had the care of my rooms at Maudlin, to send me, per coach, a strong reinforcement to my wardrobe.

To my father I communicated the acquaintance I had made with Mr. Manners, and the curious circumstance of the relationship ; but said nothing, for the present, of the prospect (distant as it was) of an introduction to Lord Castleton.

Having all these things in train, I began then to think of my engagement to return to the Grange, and once more took the road to Binfield. By way of variety, however, under my landlord's direction, I took a different course, by what is called the Forest-road, which (such is the beauty of this fairy land) was hardly less attractive than Asher's Wood itself.

CHAPTER IV.

THE DISAPPOINTMENTS IN THE FRIENDSHIPS OF A MAN OF THE WORLD, AS RELATED BY MR. MANNERS.—HIS ACCOUNT OF A MODERN PHARISEE, AND OF CERTAIN MODERN FEMALE CHARACTERS.—THE VISITING BOOK OF A LADY OF FASHION.—HIS OPINION OF THE PROFESSION OF AN AUTHOR.

It is a pretty mocking of the life.

Here is a touch ! Is't good ?

I'll say of it,

It tutors nature.

SHAKSPEARE.—*Timon of Athens*.

WHEN I first set out to re-visit the Grange, nothing promised fairer than the weather ; but the gathering of summer clouds, at first fleecy and light, and emitting a few heat drops, soon thickening into dark heavy masses, and pouring down torrents, compelled me to look for shelter.

I found it in one of the pretty cottages that throng the forest, the mistress of which, a well-looking young woman, beckoned me to her door, and begged me to come in. I did so, and found an epitome of neatness and comfort which always pleases. She had two children, whose appearance, as well as her own, exhibited the same neatness. Yet she was engaged in menial offices ; in fact, by the pots on the fire, preparing food for her little ones, and, as I supposed, her expected husband.

I asked if this was not the case, which brought a gloom over her countenance, when she told me she was a widow.

“So young ?” said I.

“Yes,” she replied ; and she and her babes might have sunk under it, for they had had misfortunes, and the creditors were hard

with them, and all her means had failed with her husband's life. "But God," said she, "raised me up friends."

As I liked this sort of conversation, I asked who? and she replied, "Two gentlemen in the neighbourhood, Sir William Thompson; who lived in the great house I had just passed, and Mr. Manners, of the Grange."

Struck a little with this, I wished to hear more of her benefactors, and as I needed no information as to Mr. Manners, inquired about Sir William.

"They be both good," replied the poor woman, "and will, I hope, both go to heaven for what they did for the widow and orphan; I am sure I should be the most ungratefullest wretch upon earth if I did not pray for them both, particularly Mr. Manners."

Here she became embarrassed, as if she had said something improper, and began to explain that she did not mean any thing particular by that against Sir William, for it was most true, that both were excellent gentlemen, and "God knows," she added, "to me have been blessed benefactors, for they preserved me and my infants from sinking beyond redemption: nor do I really know as to their goodness that there can be any difference between them, for both are good, and give away a deal of money; and yet——"

Here she paused again, as if in thought, and fearful to go on.

"And yet what?" said I, wishing to hear her story.

"O! I am afraid I am very ungrateful, and therefore very wicked, to make the least distinction between these good gentlemen, who have both wiped the widow's tears, and comforted her and her babes against the wind and cold, when they had no house, nor bread to eat."

At this she looked around her neat and warm apartment, where every thing was so comfortable.

"No," she proceeded, "Sir William has even done more for us, as to money, than Mr. Manners; and I must be a bad creature to like one better than t'other, if indeed I do so."

Here again she looked rather distressed, as if taking herself to task, and sighed not a little.

"My good woman," I observed, desirous to encourage her not to think ill of herself, "I am sure one who seems so sensible to kindness, and so grateful, can have no reason for self-blame."

"Ah! Sir," she replied, "I believe it is because I am so sensible to kindness that I feel I do like one better than the other; and that's what makes me so angry with myself; for I am not more grateful to Mr. Manners, though I cannot help liking him best; and I am sure I pray God to bless them both, for both deserve it."

A tear stood in her eye as she said this, and as she wiped it away, she added—

"God forgive me, I have been very foolish to talk so. I hope,

sir, you are not a friend to Sir William. I am sure I would rather die than offend him after all he has done for me."

To comfort her, I told her I was not at all acquainted with Sir William, but was the friend of Mr. Manners, to whose house I was going ; and I asked her to tell me why she preferred the one to the other, when both were so good.

"I am sure," answered she, "I be not able to tell, except that Mr. Manners be more kind-like—(no—that's not it neither, for Sir William, as I say, is very kind), but Mr. Manners be more free, and talks to me like a father, and planned my little garden for me himself, and often comes into the cottage and hears the children read ; and when I first fell into misfortin, Sir William only sent his man to me, who rather huffed me ; but Mr. Manners cum himself, and was as gentle as a lamb. Besides, though Sir William gave me a good deal of this furniture, I never saw him but once, for he seldom calls, and never comes in when he does, and always holds himself high ; and his butler, who sometimes brings messages, be higher still. Poor folks can always distinguish these things by the pleasure or pain it give them."

"Well, my good woman," said I, "you have explained this perfectly well, and I can easily understand it ; nor would Sir William, I dare say, himself take it ill, when he heard that Mr. Manners seemed like a father to you, which he must know *he* did not."

"O! Sir," she replied, "if you be going to Mr. Manners's, I hope you will not mention any thing I have said of him ; but I must always love him as a pattern for all other gentlefolks."

The demeanour of this good creature really affected me, and gave me a good lecture to boot on the mistake of those who, however generous as to money, think that the mere giving it away suffices to all the requisites of charity. It gave me, too, the best comment on what St. Paul says upon the subject, "that though a man give all his goods to feed the poor, and hath not charity, it profiteth him nothing."

Let the many Sir William Thompsons there are, who give much of their abundance, but little of their kindness, think of the distinction made by this humble cottager between her benefactors, and do better.

I was thankful to the shower for having procured me a lesson I never forgot, and I conn'd it over and over during the rest of my fragrant walk to the Grange—more fragrant for the shower.

I found Mr. Manners enjoying it himself, and snuffing up the breath of his flowers with a pleasure that would have made a king envy him, and (without interrupting it by returning my salutation, but as if carrying on a previous conversation) he said,

"I allow this is very sensual, and yet it has mind in it too, for the sensuality is so mixed with elegance, that there is a refinement

in it, and the heart expands with grateful feeling, which always does good to the mind. Now that is not the case with a gross dinner, although we say grace for it; there is no sentiment in a ragout. But pray how did you escape the shower?"

It may be supposed I told him, with all the circumstances of my conversation with the cottager, not withholding all that she said of himself.

"Ah! poor Nancy," said he, "she might, as she says, have sunk if we had not done something for her: but Sir William did far more than I. Indeed he has a larger fortune, of which, perhaps, it would be better if he was not quite so proud. However, we must thank givers for the good they do, let them do it in what way they will."

"Sir William, however, appears to be charitable?"

"Why, yes! He also thinks himself humble; that is, he boasts of his humility; but it is not gospel humility, for he would never wash his disciples' feet; he is much too fastidious for such an office—one of what I call the ostentatious godly; in fact, a pharisee."

"Is he not really then benevolent?"

"Yes! but not after the pattern of the widow's mite; still less of Him he thinks he imitates. When he has well dined, and seen all the comforts of his house regulated, nothing wanting in any department—kitchen, cellar, stables, domestics, and all other appliances—his heart will really open, or appear to do so, and *whatever he has to spare*, he will give, for the Lord's sake; but he will not deny himself any one indulgence, to help a man in need."

"I comprehend," said I.

"Then as to his humility," continued Mr. Manners, "though he certainly gave poor Nancy money enough, as a sort of composition for his soul (as people formerly used to pay for masses), he never personally took any interest in her, because she was not fine enough in herself or her house for him to come in contact with them. Besides, it was beneath one of the Elect to descend to such an intercourse with a mere profane person. Hence, what he did, was always by deputy, in the person of Mr. Gamaliel, his butler, who gave the poor woman to understand, that from her too great anxiety in attending to her children, which interfered with her praying, she was, as Touchstone said to the Shepherd, 'in a parlous state, and would certainly be damned.' Indeed, his master says as much of me, because once, in an argument with him, I said I believed that Christ died for the whole world, if they obeyed his gospel, and not merely for half-a-dozen self-elect, who called themselves the godly."

"But let us leave such trumpery to themselves, and return to Whittington and his cat. I wrote to Fothergill last night to tell him you were here, and ask whether I was right in the opinion I had

formed of you ; for, to tell you the truth, I have been frequently taken in, both by men and women, from a sort of headlong disposition to rush at once into liking or disliking a person from the impulse of the moment, I hated Sir William the first time I saw him, though I could not tell why ; but I was not wrong there."

This account of himself did not too much delight me. I was afraid he might have repented, or would do so ; or that, with all his seeming sobriety and judgment, he might be capricious. In short, I felt alarmed, and by way of feeling the ground, ventured to ask if I might know how he, who appeared so judicious, could be so taken in ; and whether most by men or women ? In short, I wished him to develop himself, that I might better understand him.

"A very modest request," answered he, laughing ; "yet, as you are a kinsman, and about to launch into the world, I should have no objection to give you a few cautions, the result of a pretty long experience."

"I should desire nothing better," said I ; "and it would crown the obligations I already feel to you."

"It however requires time," said he, "for, from the nature of objects on which I have fixed my affections, I have passed my latter days with few disappointments ; trees, and blossoms, and books deceive little, so that I have, in fact, had 'no enemy but winter and rough weather.' I have, therefore, been little out of humour in consequence, and have nearly forgotten the whips and scorns of earlier, and more active life.

"But let me see. Oh ! there was the Duke of Brakenbury : I was one of his party in politics, and, he was pleased to say, a serviceable one. I helped him also in his county ; we were hand and glove ; I dined with him every week in town, and staid sometimes a month with him in the country. I attributed this at first to our political connection alone ; but he swore that had I no seat in parliament, or thought differently from him on public questions, he would have singled me out as a private friend. Well, he changed his party, though there was no change of measures ; I refused to follow him ; and he never spoke to me afterwards.

"There was another great man—a very great man—whose country interests I espoused with effect when at Bolton-le-Moor ; but I left the castle, and from that time to this we have been scarcely civil.

"What I think of, however, with most regret, is the separation from me by a man I really loved, from a low spirit of rivalry, and consequent ill usage, to which I thought him superior. We were college friends ; had many tastes in common ; and he was often my companion at the Warren-house, where we read together. Both were destined for public life, and embarked in it under the same leader—his Grace of Brakenbury ; but, from being more highly

connected, I was rather more among people of fashion. This was the first grievance ; for Dalton's weakness was an ambition to have a high place in that class. He married early, and his wife, the daughter of a nabob, shared, or rather went beyond him in this ambition ; and my mother, Lady Elizabeth, living then in town, our families became intimate. The jealousy I have mentioned soon shewed itself. The coronets, too often at our door, and too seldom at theirs, gave umbrage : we were watched at public places, and quarrelled with for only being noticed by our titled friends and relations, while they had none of the same rank to notice them. It absorbed us, they said, so much as to make us neglect them. This was sad nonsense. But I was in parliament—Dalton not. This was not so easily forgiven. I made a speech which got me some credit, but it was unfairly represented, and contemptuously criticized in one of the papers, with a laboured attempt to shew how much better it might have been, if certain omissions had not been made, and certain topics had been omitted. This was noted by the duke, and in discussing it with him, I gathered that he knew the criticism was by Dalton.

But criticism did not stop here. I was romantic ; and, to amuse myself, I wrote a romance which had a run. My friend turned author too, and wrote a political pamphlet, which nobody read. My romance was cut all to pieces, or thought to be so, in one of the Reviews. The review was laughed at, and the romance went through several editions. You will hardly believe that Dalton was the reviewer. Both he and his wife professed to admire my work ; but the lady, in her private circle, always thanked God that her husband did not write romances.

“ Could our friendship continue ? No ! we came to no explanations ; but Dalton, knowing I had discovered him, saved me the trouble, by never coming near me, and we gradually cooled off without any eclat.”

“ This is not much encouragement,” said I, seeing Mr. Manners had finished this part of his story, “ for a young gentleman beginning his progress in life. You said you had been taken in both by men and women. I trust you have no more cases against the men ?”

“ Few of any consequence, at least, to my happiness,” replied he ; “ and as to the higher criminals against the state or general morals, they belong to a higher class, and not to the category we are upon.”

“ I trust, then, you will come to the women, which, I own, I am curious to hear.”

“ If you expect a history of jilting and broken vows, you will be disappointed,” replied he ; “ and you will recollect I only said I had been not unfrequently deceived in the expectations I had too hastily formed as to the characters of individual females.”

“This will be quite interesting enough,” said I, “if you will but proceed.”

“It will not be very easy,” returned he, “if only from an *embarras des richesses*. For, though I do not agree with Pope, that

‘Most women have no character at all,’

but, on the contrary think they have so many different ones, that it is difficult to discover which prevails, it is, I dare say, from this very difficulty that my expectations have so often been disappointed.”

“Are they then of so many characters?” asked I.

“What says your own experience?”

“Alas!” returned I, “I have very little; hardly any; for the only female I ever studied, had none of this variety. She was ever as uniformly good, and gracious, as she was beautiful.”

“Indeed!” said my Mentor, and darted a penetrating look at me; but seeing I was embarrassed, very kindly observed, “you have been more fortunate in your study than I, for as far as I have seen, what Romeo says of love may be applied to the very nature of those who cause it—

‘O! any thing, of nothing first created!

O! heavy lightness! serious vanity!

Feather of lead! bright smoke! cold fire! sick health.’”

“But I long for the cases,” said I.

“Well,” returned he, “take the wife of one of my best friends, who, it must be owned, married her rather precipitately, having only seen her a month at Bath. Never shall I forget the rapture with which he informed me that he had found a temper of the most exquisite and cheerful softness, after his own heart. His days would be all sunshine; her smile was heaven, and she always smiled. To do him justice, this appeared no more than what she deserved, for there was an expression in her countenance and an alacrity of obligingness in her manner that made me think with him. I congratulated him sincerely, and only wished that heaven had made me such a one. In truth, she seemed angelic.”

“And was she not?”

“Why, yes; but her angelic nature was twofold; compounded of light, certainly, but also of darkness. For at the end of the first three months, I witnessed a quarrel that appalled me, and which, to recollect, appals me still. The dispute was not like that of Sir Charles and Lady Racket, whether a card played was a heart or a diamond¹, but whether she should have an opera box, though he proved he could not afford it. To call him a poor beggar, who ought not to have married her, was the least of what he suffered. Spite of my presence, she seemed quite transformed with passion. Her eyes

¹ See *Three Weeks after Marriage*.

flashed, her brow scowled; scorn, anger, and resentment amounting to hatred, fired every feature. I could not have believed the rancour of a fury could be so personified. Gentleness! Mercy on us! every look was changed to wrath, and those beautiful locks, which had so enchanted my friend, seemed turned to snakes. Fearing she would strike him, and unwilling to witness such unseemliness, I fled the house with precipitation. They accommodated matters as well as they could, but my friend was never his own man again, and never afterwards talked of sunshine,”

“This is deplorable,” said I. “I trust you had not many disappointments of this sort?”

“Not precisely of this spice of the devil under a fair outside,” answered he; “but enough of follies in the place of expected virtues, and too many of ridiculous caprice and inconstancy, in lieu of seeming friendship.”

“*Par exemple?*”

“The Lady Feignwell, who, from being my relation, I much studied. She was a peeress, not only of the highest fashion (which all peeresses are not), but perhaps *the* most accomplished woman in Europe. Highly cultivated; full of beautiful talents; music, dancing, drawing, languages; and when she pleased, the most engaging, I may say the most fascinating manners that ever belonged to the sex. But then, with her inferiors in station at least, she pleased to be engaging only in the country. There she was affable as well as elegant, and seemingly fond of her neighbours, upon whom she showered civilities, making all her attractions tell, so as to produce a conviction in their minds that she loved their society. She would do the honours of her table, and lay herself out a whole evening to *do the agreeable*, as if they were dukes and duchesses. She would call upon any particular family whom she was pleased to distinguish, three or four times a week, and would seem mightily hurt if not let in.

“If sometimes the cloven foot appeared in regard to some whose rusticity she did not like, and their John Bull feelings resented it, she would then vote the sentimental, make such touching apologies, and take such blame to herself, that her slights, coupled with such self-blame, got her more friends than her condescensions. With some she would go so far as to profess her delight in thinking of intercourse with them in town. Will it be believed, that *in* town, she fled them like a pestilence? her own doors always closed; theirs never knocked at; or if perchance they met, looks cold as ice proclaiming the altered feeling. Yet with all this, she was not perfect even in her own class of character.”

“How so?”

“I have told you she was, or thought herself, sentimental; affected the affable and condescending, though the farthest from it

force, with many of them, all visits for two or three days, and I found that to have five-and-twenty miles of moors between us did any thing but make Blackdown Castle come up to La Bruyère's idea of a solitude, '*Repos, retraite, et un endroit qui soit son domaine.*' On the contrary, I felt twenty times a-day that my whistling ploughman might say to me,

'A simple, rustic home of liberty
Is worth your honours in captivity.'

"In fine, I discovered that the life I was leading suited not even my fortune, much less my habits; for my Lord Badlesmere, with less income than befitted an earl, had lived like a duke, and left me a revenue very disproportionate to the place. I gladly, therefore, returned to this my 'rustic home of liberty,' where I enjoy what, after all the vicissitudes of what is thought good fortune, is among the purest and most real sources of happiness, '*Sibi posse vivere, et Musis, et cum paucis non fallacibus amicis, in agelli angulo, consenescere*'¹."

Here he ceased, and the Dutchman, who was learning *à être vif*, at which I had indulged a laugh, was forgotten in the seriousness with which these last sentences were uttered. The story and the bottle were now ended, and coffee coming in, put an end for the present to our pleasant conversation.

The after-dinner stroll now came on, for Manners was one of the first who had emancipated himself from the custom, so subversive of all good-feeling and all rational enjoyment, which in those days prevailed, of exciting, and therefore deteriorating both the mind and constitution by more wine than nature required. We talk of our good old forefathers! Surely they were good old brutes, worshippers of the baneful cup of Comus,

"Whose pleasing poison
The visage quite transforms of him who drinks,
And the inglorious likeness of a beast
Fixes instead, unmoulding reason's mintage."

We talk of modern amusements, rail-roads and steam—how far more beneficial to our happiness is the improvement in our manners, which makes it now a reproach instead of a glory for a gentleman to be drunk.

It was not yet quite evening (for fifty years ago we did not dine at eight o'clock in the country), but the sun was approaching his final declension:

'Et jam summa procul villarum culmina fumant:
Majoresque cadunt altis de montibus umbræ'²."

¹ 'To be able to live to one's self, and in the corner of one's farm grow old in the cultivation of the Muses and a few sincere friends.'

² "And now in the distance the cottage chimneys begin to smoke, and a lengthened shade falls from the lofty hills."

The air was balmy, and the scent of the flowers seemed to perfectionate our sensual enjoyments. We had approached the opening into the fields, where half-a-dozen beautiful cows were winding in a waving line from the milking byre to their night pasture, and made the air resound with their lowing.

My classical host, after contemplating them a few minutes, broke out with—

“ Aut in reducta valle mugientium
Prospectat errantes greges.”

“ This,” said he, “ is the most soothing time of the day, and this the most soothing of sights. It gives you the idea of a delicious plenty afforded by nature, accompanied with independence and perfect innocence, insuring rest and tranquillity. How happy when the evening of life resembles it.”

“ It is superior to the morning,” said I, “ in pleasurable sensations.”

“ Not quite,” observed he, smiling; “ for content as I am with my evening, I perhaps should have no objection to a little of your youth. And yet I am not sure; for one would not willingly go out again to sea when the haven is in sight. I am not a Lord Ligonier.”

I asked his allusion, and he told me that Lord Ligonier, when at eighty, found himself still a man of pleasure, and was asked for promotion by his relation, the present General Lascelles. “ I am three-and-twenty,” said Lascelles, “ and yet I am but a cornet.” “ Be thankful, you young dog,” said Ligonier. “ I am Commander-in-chief, but would change with you to-morrow.” “ Now this I am not prepared to say, even to you.”

“ I don’t know why you should,” said I, “ for you seem the picture of happiness, and deserve to be so. Virgil, in the eclogue you quoted just now, must certainly have seen you and this retreat in a vision, when he wrote the lines,

‘ Fortunate senex, ergo tua rura manebunt;
Fortunate senex, hic inter flumina nota,
Et fontes sacros, frigus captabis opacum ’.”

Mr. Manners nodded his head, and seemed by no means ill-pleased with the allusion.

“ I know not,” said he, “ if I have a right to be addressed by the epithet of Fortunatus; but if a capability, in my old age, of enjoying such a scene as this, and being alive in a summer evening to the pleasures of sacred fountains and the cool shade, will justify the appellation, perhaps it may belong to me. The situation, prospects, hopes, and fears of an old man, particularly in reference to

‘ Fortunate old man, whose farm is preserved to you, and who, amidst your well-known streams and sacred fountains, enjoyest the cool shade.’

and comparison with youth, have not, as you may suppose, passed unexamined by me."

"The result," said I, "must be edifying, and much I doubt if you, at least, can justify the character of

'Strict age and sour severity.'"

"Thanking you for the compliment," returned he, "I know not if that character is a fair one, for it is our own fault if we are not as happy as you; though the happiness of youth, from the exuberance, nay, the riot of its hopes, is so great, that if we had not even still richer, though not such riotous hope, there would be no sort of comparison between us. With this richer hope, I would not yield you one jot of happiness more than a healthy old man might enjoy."

"This is very charming," said I, "and I quite long to be enlightened on so interesting a subject."

"Why, it is not," replied he, "the loss of youth, in regard to its sensual enjoyments, that forms the regrets of old age; for the latter may have quite as much positive enjoyment as the former."

Seeing me look surprised, "Nay, start not," said he, "for I must tell you what perhaps you must be old before you know. Quiet, rest, and tranquillity, are quite as happy, if not happier things than excitement. It is the less and less prospect of the happiness continuing that embitters the last years of those who are quitting the world, *if they have no consolation in doing so*. Could a man of seventy, at ease in body and mind, look forward to fifty years more in the same condition he is in, as you young men do, (though far from being sure of it), he would be quite as happy, perhaps happier, in his arm-chair, than you in a fox chase."

"Rather a tame sort of happiness," said I.

"But still happiness," answered he, "and of the most demonstrable kind. For, let me ask you, in your late journeys on foot, how many miles did you make in a day?"

"Sometimes twenty."

"And when you came to your inn of an evening, what did you do?"

"Nothing, for I was too tired, and sought repose."

"Just so; and you found that the repose of doing nothing after a long journey was a great pleasure. So says Milton:

'Refreshment after toil, ease after pain.'"

"I see what you mean," said I.

"I am glad of it," replied he, "for you now see that my arm-chair in the evening of life is as great a pleasure as your evening repose after a long day's journey. But even in youth, healthy existence—that is, a tranquil enjoyment of it in the simple act of breath-

ing—is (thanks to Him who so ordained it!) positive enjoyment, and in itself enough. Besides, as I once heard one old man, an ex-cabinet minister, say to another, who was lamenting that there was nothing left in the world worth enjoying,—‘You forget that we can eat our dinners and sleep on our beds.’

“Of the efficiency of one of these sources you will perhaps need no conviction, after what you witnessed in me two hours ago. This I own is rather unsentimental; but add to it what I am supposing in the case, the power of meditation, reading, and agreeable conversation, and do not flatter yourself that an old man is not as happy as a young one. If he has fewer desires, he has fewer mortifications, for most innocent nature never meant

‘As if her children should be riotous with her abundance.’”

“All that is beautifully true,” observed I; “but are we wrong in supposing that there are evils peculiar to old age,

‘The lean and slipper’d pantaloon,
The hose, a world too wide for his shrunk shank?’

“But I will not go on, except indeed that I recollect a denunciation of old age by Rousseau, which cannot offend *you*, at least, who are greatly too far off it to be affected by it.”

“O! even if I were not,” said he, “by all means let us have it.”

I hesitated a little; but, urged by him, at length repeated,

“Vieux, on le méprise, on l’évite,
Mauvaise humeur, infirmité,
Toux, gravelle, goutte, pituite,
Assiégent sa caducité.”

Far from taking this ill, it moved his laughter.

“And pray,” said he, “thou representative of most immaculate and unimpeachable youth, do not the world despise and avoid empty young coxcombs, who bore you with their self-sufficient and boisterous spirits, as well as languishing old men? Are you never in bad humour? Have you no infirmities? no coughs, gravel, or even gout? I reject this monopoly of disease and ill-humour by age; though I grant you the other terrors are too faithfully described; not only the ‘shrunk shank,’ but ‘the big manly voice, turning again towards childish treble pipes;’ and even the ‘second childishness,’

‘Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans every thing.’

“Yet these last, by making us wish for death, would reconcile us to it; and even these last do not proscribe mind. These, however, are extreme cases, for seldom indeed do all these privations befall one individual, and leave him without any resources. Perhaps the resources left have even heightened enjoyments to make up for

what is lost. Take my own example. God has taken away something, but has left me more. I am deaf, but I might have been blind. I cannot hear the blackbird, but I can enjoy this ample prospect, as much, or more than ever. I cannot walk twenty miles a-day, as you do ; but I can sit on a bench, and, better than you (because I feel it more), feel and adore the sun.

“My gratitude for this is not only greater, as it ought to be, when I consider what I might be, but is of a more exquisite and warmer nature, and therefore makes me happier than the feelings upon it of a youth, who, seeing how common it is, looks upon it as a right. Be assured the frame of mind which old age thus generates, alone balances, nay, more than balances, all the gay carelessness of youth.

“Let me return then to that with which I set out, and which alone I hold as a set-off against youth ; I mean a healthy old age, unburthened by conscience, having honourable retrospections, and alive to mental cheerfulness. With these, an old man need envy no young one.

“One evil there is, I grant you, and that a severe one. The loss of friends, together with the prospect of being soon lost one’s self. But besides that no young age can be insured against this, even here is consolation in hope—the hope of living again, and in a better world joining the loved beings who have gone before us. I thank God that, far from having parted with this hope, it has increased with my years, and in the indulgence of it I wait with calmness the approach of the ‘inaudible and noiseless foot of Time.’”

I could not, and indeed wished not, to reply to this, for I felt both its force and its pathos.

A pause ensued, which, from its solemnity neither of us seemed inclined to interrupt, till, warming with his last sentiment, he asked me if I had ever seen some beautiful lines of Hughes, which he said should be written in letters of gold :

“There let Time’s creeping winter shed
His reverend snow around my head ;
And while I feel by fast degrees
My sluggard blood wax chill and freeze,
Let thought unveil to my fix’d eye
A scene of deep eternity,
Till, life dissolving at the view,
I wake, and find the vision true.”

CHAPTER III.

OF A VERY INTERESTING SUGGESTION MADE BY MR. MANNERS TO CLIFFORD.—HOW GLADLY HE RECEIVED, AND HOW SOON HE FORGOT IT, IN CONTEMPLATING THE MOON.

“How sweet the moonlight sleeps upon this bank.”

In such a night Medea gathered the enchanted herbs that did recover old Æson.

SHAKESPEARE.—*Merchant of Venice*.

AT the close of our conversation in the last chapter, a servant announced tea in the library, and I suppose I looked surprised, as there were no ladies in the house and Manners had not ordered it; so he thought it necessary to explain.

“I see,” said he, “your wonder at this : but it is only one other accompaniment of the solitary life. For where we are not bound to take note of time by any superior demand upon it, unless we make one for ourselves, the machine would run down of itself. The terms *soon* and *late* would be lost, and the hours of the house would run wild. This I found after I finally settled myself here, in the sort of *robe de chambre* life I lead. The robe would never be off my back, if there was not a regular order of things, and times for doing them. At first, the cook, the butler, the groom, never knew where to have me, nor I them; so I drew up a code of laws for our common government; the time of all meals, for all persons, was enacted, and exactly kept to; and since that we have done pretty well. I am quizzed for this, too, among other things, by my charitable neighbours, who sneer at me as a bore of an old man, who moves by clockwork. I answer, I wish their lives were half as regular as my clock. So now you see why we have been summoned to tea, and why I dare not disobey; all which, whether you approve or disapprove, you may put down to the account of Solitude.”

“I shall be an adept, I have no doubt, at last,” said I.

“An adept as to theory, if you will, but not in practice. You must put off that to this time-forty years.”

This not unnaturally led to inquiries as to my professional views; “for, undoubtedly,” said he, “you must have some; though I suppose, from your Sedbergh exhibition at Queen’s, and your election afterwards to Maudlin, they are clerical; a college tutor and a country parson, like your master, Fothergill; but, heavens! how that man was thrown away.”

“He does not think so himself,” observed I; “nor do I believe he would have been half so happy in the actual world, much as he knows of its theory. He failed, you know, in endeavouring to become a politician under Lord Castleton.”

“He did so; though Castleton both loved and respected him; but he had not the *esprit liant*. I trust you will not imitate him in that.”

“You know Lord Castleton, then?”

“Yes, full well; for not only am I his near relation through the Badlesmeres, but when I was in the world we were great political friends. He was one of the few whom I really believed honest in his ambition; and he used to say I was one of the few who was sincere in my love of privacy. He sometimes writes to me, and more than once has unbent for four-and-twenty hours at a time at the Grange. By the way, I wish you knew him. He has often complained to me that he never could attach a young man of parts to his service, for his own sake; or who did not acquire such a vast opinion of himself, that he was forced to dismiss him in his own defence. Do you know, it has already struck me, once or twice, in the course of our conversations, that you would just suit him. You are well born, which he likes; well-looking, which he likes; and *ingenui vultus puer*, which he very much likes. Your romance and your sentiment would be no drawback, for he once had them himself; and your apparent scholarship would be an additional recommendation, for he not only had, but retains, a considerable portion of literature to this day.”

I was absolutely bewildered during this speech. I could not believe my new-found kinsman in earnest: my colour came and went; and Fothergill's suggestions to the same effect rushing into my mind, I became dizzy with the thousand notions which, thus repeated, they engendered.

Mr. Manners seeing me agitated, asked the cause of it; and having recovered myself, I fairly told him my surprise at the extraordinary coincidence between him and Fothergill upon this point.

“Surprising, but not displeasing, I trust,” said he.

“Very far from it,” replied I, “if I were only worthy of it. But obscure, ignorant of the world, particularly of the high world, its manners, maxims, and conventions; what would become of me? and even if your unaccountable sudden feeling of favour towards me, which I know not how I can have acquired——”

“O!” interrupted he; “truce with your modesty here, at least, though it might become you in the presence of a perhaps jealous patron. As to your obscurity, a demy of Maudlin, with the prospect of a fellowship, belongs absolutely to *noblesse*; and such obscurity as Addison set out with cannot be very detrimental. Then you are a De Clifford and a Bardolfe:

“A noble young fellow three ages ago.”

Last and not least, you will please to observe, you are my first cousin, only three or four times removed. The devil's in it, should Castleton have a vacancy in his *bureau*, if he would fill it obscurely.

in choosing you. I must only lay my wits together with Fothergill's, to see how to bring it about."

Then, seeing that I was still agitated, and that the evening was fast closing in, he said, "There, I have spoiled your contemplative walk home to-night, notwithstanding that rising moon, which will make me envy you the chequered shade she will cause in Asher's Wood. But go, and enjoy it if you can, notwithstanding the dream of the world I have raised in you. I suppose you will feel a little like Gil Blas, after hearing the momentous words—'You now belong to the king!' But love the moon, notwithstanding: think of what I have told you, and pray dine with me again to-morrow."

At these words he playfully almost pushed me out of the room, and, as I passed the open window, called out, "If you hear any bells, though only a sheep-bell, in your way home, think of one Whittington, and that they cry,

' Turn again, Whittington,
Lord Mayor of London town.' "

With this prophetic distich in my ears, I certainly, at first, thought much of London town; but the dream did not last long. For though, for the first two or three hundred yards, my fancy conjured up many visions of the interesting novelties of public life, it was scarcely possible for them to continue in the pastoral village of Binfield.

The bean-flowers, that richest and sweetest of scents, which here flourished in profusion, and perhaps gave its name to the village, again perfumed the air, and filled all the senses with a soothing voluptuousness wholly incompatible with dreams of ambition. It was impossible to think of courts in such a garden.

The day, too, had for some time sunk, and given place to what has well been called, "a universal gravity." Twilight herself seemed departing, and the gleams of her silver tints, after having lingered a minute on the higher objects, as if to claim a last farewell, dropt suddenly from the sight, and were gone almost as soon as seen.

There was a moral in this which effectually banished worldly desires; for it made me reflect how uncertain is our hold on all we may most love.

I gave way therefore to holier aspirations; and forgot Lord Castleton and his *bureau* in far different and higher speculations.

And now the moon had begun to array herself in melting softness. Was it possible for the mind to dwell upon artificial grandeur, or any power belonging to man, under such surpassing proofs of creative splendour in the Omnipotent? No heart could resist its influence; and mine forgot this lower world, in thinking of His power and beneficence who dwelt above.

What made the scene more rich and seductive, was the gradual majestic advance of this all-diffusing orb, from faint beginnings to the wide-spreading influence of universal brightness. For at first, scarce seen in the horizon, the effect upon surrounding objects was not so great, and the hemisphere remained for a while only just visible. But soon rising higher and higher, she shot forth all her glories,

“ Firing the proud tops of the eastern pines.”

This made me, her worshipper, bow down, senseless to any influence but her own; for while the whole vault of heaven was cloudless, every ray told upon the surrounding landscape, and I never so much felt the exact as well as sublime description of him who excelled in sublimity and exactness :—

“ Now Heav’n in all her glory shone, and roll’d
Her motions as the great first mover’s hand
First wheel’d her course ; earth in her rich attire
Consummate, lovely, smiled.”

No; I could not think of Lord Castleton, fearing, if I did so, heaven and earth would rebuke me for my selfishness.

And yet with all this rapture (for it was no less) in regard to this lovely planet, I somehow or another felt a want for her. She seemed too dependent upon another, whose deputy only she was, when I would have had her a queen, with power self-derived. She seemed also *alone*, and to feel that she was so. Peerless, as she rode through the boundless ether, I wished to give her a companion. She appeared a widow, or an orphan, or both. The happiness she diffused to others seemed wanting to herself.

These thoughts possessed me so much, that I invoked the Muse upon them, and before I got to Oakingham, they had arranged themselves in some stanzas, which perhaps I might venture to record, but that long—long since they were composed, the same thought was embodied by a superior genius, whose premature and most affecting death has enhanced the interest of all her productions¹. Among the sweetest of them is the sonnet I allude to, which the reader may pass over if he pleases ; but if he reads it, I think he will thank me.

SONNET TO THE MOON.

The moon is sailing o’er the sky,
But *lonely* all, as if she pined
For something of companionship,
And felt it was in *vain* she shined.

Earth is her mirror, and the stars
Are as a court around her throne ;
She is a beauty, and a queen,
But what of that ? she is *alone*.

¹ L. E. L.

Is there not one, not one to share
 Thy glorious royalty on high?
 I cannot choose but pity thee,
 Thou lovely orphan of the sky.

I'd rather be the meanest flow'r
 That grows, my mother earth, on thee,
 So there were others of my kin
 To blossom, bloom, and die with me.

Earth, thou hast sorrow, grief, and death,
 But with these better could I bear,
 Than guide and rule yon radiant sphere,
 And be a *solitary* there.

With such reflections as these, in which perhaps there was a tinge of melancholy, though not unpleasing, I traversed the dewy lawns and still woods (too still, for it was too late in the year for the nightingale) that lay between Binfield and Oakingham. What they wanted in melody, however, they endeavoured to make up in freshness, which was emitted from every leaf and every tuft and wild-flower which spread itself to the influence of the soft night air. The effect upon the nerves was perfect, and when I saw the lights and buildings of Oakingham, I felt displeased, for they took me back to the world.

Yet I soon remembered that for that world I was destined; and the Royal Oak, where a weekly club still lingered, after a market-day, made me forget my romance; and the bells of the church, on which the ringers, according to good old English custom, were exercising their skill, in I don't know how many bob majors, made me recollect, though without superstition, the allusion of Mr. Manners to—"Turn again, Whittington."

Having got me to bed, I gave myself up to serious reflection on the (to me) strange events of the day;—the discovery of my relationship to Mr. Manners, acknowledged by him in so frank and flattering a manner that it was incontestable; the accomplished mind of that gentleman; his great and sudden favour towards me, and the extraordinary prospect he held forth as the possible result of it with Lord Castleton—all this made me resolve to write in detail to Fothergill, and shortly to my family. My bosom swelled with hope, and I fell into a sound and happy sleep, from which I did not wake for several hours.

The next day I executed my purpose, by giving my *quondam* tutor the whole history of my rencontre with his friend, and my obligations to that friendship in procuring me originally so much of his notice. I then detailed the wonder of our discovered connection; Mr. Manners' increased kindness in consequence; and, finally, the hope he had held out of some benefit which, with his (Fothergill's) assistance, it might procure for me with Lord Castleton.

no companion but your dog. If you have any little handycraft arts, if merely for amusement, but especially if for purposes of utility, where can your interests cease? You may be a carpenter with your tool chest; a turner with your lathe; you may make baskets, weave nets, knit garters, or twist whiplashes like Will Wimble; or, if fond of the politer arts, you may try to paint like Sir George Beaumont.

“What shall I say if you are a farmer? Go to your Virgil on the employments of his *Agricola*, when confined to the house in bad weather, which is a sort of solitude.

‘*Multa forent quæ mox cœlo properanda sereno,
Maturare datur : durum procudit arator
Vomeris obtusi dentem, cavat arbore lintres,
Aut pecori signum, aut numeros impressit acervis.
Exacuunt alii vallos, furcasque bicornes*’.

Here is a picture of employment for you, which must for ever banish the vapours. We see the honest man in his cottage or barn, perhaps hear him whistling while sharpening his stakes or marking his sacks.”

“A pleasing assemblage,” observed I; “but will these fill up the time of the man of education—he who shuns vacuity of mind as his worst enemy?”

“Have you not answered yourself,” returned he shrewdly, “when you suppose him a man of education? I began with an uneducated man, because most difficult to provide for. Let in mind, books of science, natural history, polite literature, moral philosophy, and, above all, religion, and your man of retirement is amply provided for.”

“By religion,” asked I, “do you mean devotion, or the study of divinity?”

“O! both, both,” replied he, with some fervour.

“My reason for asking,” continued I, “is an interested one. For though I have always found questions in divinity, young as I am, more exciting than all others, yet a layman seems to me to be so much in need of assistance, that he can do little without it, and I have therefore been glad to take refuge in authority, and believe what I have been told by my Bible, and my betters, in their mode of expounding it, without examination.”

“It was only becoming at your age,” said he, “and comfortable to every one, particularly those who are busy with the world. As

Thus paraphrased by Dryden :

‘But when cold weather and continued rain
The lab’ring husband in his house restrain,
Let him forecast his work with timely care,
Which else is huddled when the skies are fair;
Or hollow trees for boats, or number o’er
His sacks, or measure his increasing store;
Or sharpen stakes,’ etc.

we advance, however, towards that period when the near view of futurity becomes ten times more interesting, and a thousand times more awful, religion is every thing; while, important as I have described them, all other things are nothing. An inquiring mind then seeks convictions of its own, and the power to do this is the pre-eminent and almost exclusive advantage of solitude. Hence, that shrewd Paley, whom I cannot too often quote (and here Mr. Manners took down his work), has this emphatic passage :—‘ A man who is in earnest in his endeavours after the happiness of a future state has, in this respect, an advantage over all the world. For he has constantly before his eyes an object of supreme importance, productive of perpetual engagement and activity, and of which the pursuit (which can be said of no pursuit besides) lasts him to his life’s end ’.”

Mr. Manners then told me, with an air of great satisfaction, that he had already derived from his retreat, and the opportunities it had given him for uninterrupted meditation, benefits which were incalculable, and which all the power and wealth in the world could never balance.

“ It has already,” said he, “ restored me to the confidence necessary for the sweetest and most interesting of all enjoyments—the power, without the alloy of miserable doubt, of conversing with your God. Ever indeed, like you, from my youth up, though not always with the same unction, have I felt the force and beauty of those lines of our most serious poet :

‘ A soul in commune with her God is heaven;
Feels not the tumults and the shocks of life,
The whirls of passion, or the strokes of heart.’

‘ A deity believed is joy begun;
A deity adored is joy advanced;
A deity beloved is joy matured ’.”

“ This, however, with the most satisfied minds, is sadly broken in upon by the distractions of the world, whether through business or dissipation. For, let him be ever so devoutly disposed from natural bias, a man absorbed by ambition or business has not the time, and a man of pleasure has not the disposition, to seek out his Creator, and converse with his attributes. But if he is *not* so disposed, or so biassed; if his mind is unhappily wavering in a labyrinth of uncertainty and contending arguments; in short, if it is not made up what to believe and what to reject, on subjects paramount to all others in the heart of a thinking man, such a man, while immersed in the world, can have no hope of ever seeing land. He will never be cheered by the happy sound of ‘ *Italiam, Italiam.* ’ ”

¹ *Moral Philosophy*, 1, 34.

² Young.

I fully assented to this proposition, and was pleased with its classical allusion, when Mr. Manners went on :—

“Crowns and sceptres, and the utmost refinements of luxury, nay, the most dazzling splendours of fame, sink into absolute nothingness in comparison with this. In the hey-day and buoyancy of youth, indeed, and the struggles which even duty imposes upon our manhood in its meridian, we are too often careless, and, perhaps, think it pardonable to neglect the subjects which I have called paramount to all others. As our friend, the brave and natural Trim, explained his religious neglects : ‘ When a soldier has passed a whole day up to his knees in water in the trenches,—perhaps without his dinner—watching in the face of the enemy, he has little time to say his prayers.’ ”

“ But there is a time for all things, and he is fortunate, who, if he feels the want of self, or other instruction, and that the seductions of a dissipated or tumultuous, and therefore a thoughtless life, prevent him from righting his vessel and getting into port—he is fortunate, I say, who can retire from that life to seek after truth, as I have done, without disturbance.”

Mr. Manners then went on to tell me that though his early youth, with no other helps than the common instruction derived from church and catechism, was marked by a belief in all the great tenets of religion, because, like me, he never had a thought of questioning them, and was happy in what he might call his ignorance ; yet afterwards, in his meridian, and when too much occupied with the world to give his inquiries fair play, a gloom came over him in the shape of scepticism, for which, as he had always viewed it unhurt before, he could not account.

“ I had read Hume, Bolingbroke, and Voltaire,” said he, “ at twenty, and, as I thought, had triumphed over their sophisms, and was invulnerable to their sneers. Most strange it was, that at forty I myself suggested doubts to my own mind, which I did not answer, because I was too much plunged in dissipation. There were points, too, of belief demanded of me by divines and commentators, about which it had never occurred to me to hesitate, because, as you say, I took all upon authority, and, coursing gaily down the stream of life, I had neither leisure nor inclination to criticise their soundness. And far happier was I in this unlimited confidence, than when, from an eagerness for still more light, my vision became indistinct. For I began to impose upon myself the impossible task of reconciling contending divines upon articles of faith, which I had formerly believed necessary for our safety, but which I found were deemed so on grounds which to me appeared any thing but firm. To settle when to follow and when to leave these instructors of ours ; to separate enthusiasm from rational piety, cool sense from effervescing zeal, has formed much of the business of this retreat ; and

I trust I may say my efforts have been successful, for they have left me happy and confiding, not now upon authority, but *conviction*. It is best not to doubt; but if you do, how much better to believe upon cool examination and sincere persuasion. To retirement do I owe this happiness. Can I give a stronger reason for loving it?"

"You would make any one love it," observed I, "as I am sure you have me; though, if ambition be honourable, which we are told it is, the ambitious man can never be a votary; there is not room for him in solitude."

"For mere worldly ambition," said he, "by which I mean a struggle after power, preferment, or riches, certainly not. All this must be laid aside, or the recluse is a gone man. For what does the wise man say? 'ambition is like choler, which is an humour, that maketh men active, earnest, full of alacrity, and stirring, if it be not stopt. But *if it be stopt*, and cannot have its way, it becometh adust, and thereby *maligne* and *venomous*.'"

"Now if a man continues ambitious in solitude, the humour is stopt, and the, then wise man, adds he, becomes secretly discontent, looks upon men and matters with an evil eye, and is best pleased when things go backward'. Bacon, however, neglects a corollary which he might have added to this, that public men, when out of office, if they have the least *hankering* left, should never betake themselves to solitude for consolation, for they will certainly then *become adust*, and 'best pleased when things go backward.'"

"But what, may I ask," said I, "is to secure them from the hankering you have mentioned?"

He answered, "The objects for which alone they ought to retire. If their seclusion be adopted in a pet, as it often is; if from caprice, if without sufficient stores, heaven help the hermit, for he cannot help himself, but will sink down into a gross and unworthy sensualist; or, at very best, a listless burthen to himself and all about him."

"I should like, however, to hear more," said I, "of those worthier and higher pursuits in solitude, which, according to its admirers, so ennoble it."

"Look around you," he answered, "and if you cannot there find both employment and interest for a hundred lives, I have thrown away my pains and money on my library to no purpose. You must, however, often impose upon yourself the subjects you see around you, as duties, not as mere amusement. Science and philosophy must be your substantials; light summer reading only the garnish. If you adopt this plan, perhaps, you would wish the day longer than it is, even in solitude. But, woe to that day, if you confine your reading to trifles: for I need not remind you,

¹ Bacon's Essays. Art. 'Ambition.'

‘ Si non
Intendes animum studiis et rebus honestis,
Invidiâ vel amore vigil torquebere ¹.’

So says Horace.

‘ Loquor de docto homine et erudito, cui vivere est cogitare ².’

So says Cicero.

‘ But the first and noblest occupation of solitude is also its happiest, being no less than nature, and nature’s God.’

“ On this part of the subject Zimmerman shines ; and one who wrote before him, and quite as well, if not better.”

With this, Mr. Manners took *Hervey’s Meditations* from one of the shelves.

“ Start not,” said he, “ at my introducing this quaint old author to you, whom, perhaps, you young Oxonians never read, or despise if you do. Rest assured, however, that in this fanciful, but most devoted Christian, there is more, both of genius and poetry, than in any of the correct and smooth, but soul-less gentry of the present age.”

Mr. Manners then turned to the *Contemplation on Night*, and read :—“ The world is a troubled ocean, and who can erect stable purposes on its troubled waves ? The world is a school of wrong, and who does not feel himself warping to its pernicious influences ? On this sea of glass, how insensibly we slide from our own steadfastness ? Some sacred truth, which was struck in lively characters on our souls is obscured, if not obliterated. Some worthy resolution, which heaven had wrought in our breasts, is shaken, if not overthrown. Some enticing vanity, *which we had solemnly renounced*, again practises its wiles. *How often has an angry glance kindled a fever in our hearts ? How often has a word of applause dropt luscious poison in our ears, or some disrespectful expression raised a gust of passion in our bosom ?* Our innocence is of so tender a constitution, that it suffers in the crowd ; our purity of so delicate a complexion, that it scarce touches on the world without contracting a stain. We see, we hear with peril.”

“ To me,” said I, on Mr. Manners pausing, “ however forcible and eloquent, this is new ; and I shall begin to think myself like the *bourgeois gentilhomme*, who had talked prose all his life without knowing it ; for I find I have been living amid danger and corruption with equal ignorance.”

¹ ‘ Unless you light your early lamp to find
A moral book ; unless you form your mind
To nobler studies, you shall forfeit rest ;
And love or envy shall distract your breast.’

FRANCIS’ HOR. Ep. 1, 2, 3, 7.

² ‘ I speak of a learned, well-instructed man, with whom to think is to live.’

“Your age,” replied Mr. Manners gravely, “exempt you, I trust, from that suspicion. You have, in fact, been scarcely in the world we are talking of; but to me the picture is no more than just, both as to men and women. How many are there of either, who ever seriously reflect upon what they are about, or what they are pursuing, except that it is pleasure, or business, or an object of ambition? They seem all meteors, streaming on the troubled air, without knowing where they are to rest, and, provided they shine, perfectly content. Who of all who meet daily at White’s, or Brooks’s, or at the levée, or at dinners, or the Opera, or the House, ever think of what their nature, their hearts, or their God require of them; satisfied if they shock not the customs of society by very gross faults, which would drive them from it, but totally indifferent as to the rewards of conscience or of self-approbation? Is there one of these who ever, during this career, lifts his thoughts to heaven, or thinks of conversing with his God? Is not the sole and absorbing topic (that which has the ascendant for the moment), whose dinner is best, how best to shine in a society of fashionables, how to keep a place, or how turn out the ministers?”

“If you reproach them with this, far from disputing it, or even defending themselves from the attack, they will be indifferent to its truth, and coolly reply, ‘*defendit numerus.*’ Not one of these can say with the Psalmist, ‘I pour out my heart by myself;’ not one communes with that heart in his chamber and is still.”

I protested, what was true, my incapacity to judge of all this, but Mr. Manners saying it, I told him I would take it for granted, and suppose Hervey was right in what he said of the world.

“Be assured then,” he continued, “he is equally right in what he says of solitude as a contrast;—and he read on:—‘Here safety dwells. Every meddling and intrusive avocation is secluded. Silence holds the door against the strife of tongues, and all the impertinences of idle conversation. The busy swarm of vain images and cajoling temptations, which beset us with a buzzing importunity amidst the gaieties of life, are chased by these thickening shades. Here I may, without disturbance, commune with my own heart, and learn the best of sciences, to know *myself*. Here the soul may rally her dissipated powers, *and grace recover its native energy*. This is the *opportunity* to rectify every evil impression; to expel the poison and guard against the contagion of corrupting examples. This is the place where I may with advantage apply myself to subdue the rebel *within*, and be master, not of a sceptre, but of *myself*. Throng then, ye ambitious, the levées of the powerful; *I* will be punctual in my assignation with solitude. To a mind *intent upon its own improvement*, solitude has charms incomparably more engaging than the entertainments of a theatre or the honours of a drawing-room. I said solitude! But am I then alone?’

“A solemn question,” observed Manners, “to which he gives a solemn and awful answer, for he says, and says truly, that ‘God and his angels are always with him, in him, and about him.’ And this, in fact, is the real advantage of solitude, particularly in the country, that it every where prompts reflections as to nature and its author, which cannot find place in towns. Walton would never have been what he was, but for his country walks : they made every thing to look gladness and health, and beat all that the most costly art ever effected. He who can properly enjoy them, has really the

‘Vita solutorum miserâ ambitione gravique.’”

I felt this to be equally true and affecting, particularly when my companion went on :—

“Can any man, thinking thus of the world, and his retreat from it, ever feel that retreat irksome or vacant? There are moments, indeed, worth a thousand pounds, when, free from bodily complaint, mental uneasiness, or mental fear, in love with God, and in charity with man, we feel an exuberant felicity which we cannot define, but which makes us pour out our souls in genuine thanksgiving.

“Such moments, however,” continued he, “belong not to the inhabitants of the club-room or the denizen of office ; they come but to those who live in part, at least, a contemplative life, and much alone ; and such is the sweetest charm, as well as the most valuable property, of the solitude we are discussing. For such a person, thus fitted for it, though he appear the idlest and most unoccupied of men, is in fact the most busy ; his body may seem a fixture, but his thoughts, his interests, are all in motion. He has a mute but observing eye, seemingly bent on vacancy, but no vacancy to him ; for he will see, within the mere walls of his room, the whole perhaps of the peopled earth, from the beginning of time, passing in review before his intellect ; he will meditate on the nature and history of man and particularly on his own, in which he will discover a thousand minute traits which had escaped him in the world. If good, he will rejoice in them ; if bad, he will amend them ; and thus, though he stir not for hours from the fire in winter, or a garden bench in summer, yet is not his time misspent.”

My instructor said this with an unction that proved his sincerity, and only made the picture more impressive. It is certain I felt my veneration for him increase at every word he spoke, and I was, however alive to the sound, sorry when a most deep-toned bell from the top of the house, and echoed from the woodland below, announced that dinner was on the table.

CHAPTER II.

OF THE GOOD DINNER WHICH SOLITUDE MAY FURNISH TO THOSE WHO CAN AFFORD IT,
AND THE FURTHER HISTORY OF MR. MANNERS.

—
We have a trifling, foolish banquet toward.

SHAKSPEARE.—*Romeo and Juliet.*

OUR repast was *simplex munditiis*; unless the beautiful Sevre in which the viands, and the fine old Dresden in which the dessert were served, might be said to savour a little more of magnificence than neatness.

Be that as it will, it is the property of elegance always to please, and as nothing forbade it here, I own I allowed myself to enjoy all that it is so calculated to add to the usual attraction of an excellent dinner. There was an exquisite soup; the promised chicken was most savoury, and done to a turn; and claret like a ruby, and foaming Saint Peray, which my host dealt out liberally from an embossed silver ice-pail, crowned the feast.

Much as I was occupied, I could not help contrasting the scene with that in the kitchen of the Jolly Angler, and at the Ordinary of the Royal Oak; and I thought, and began to believe, my new-found cousin and preceptor agreed with me in thinking that the simplicities of nature were not incompatible with the luxuries of art, particularly at dinner-time.

If ever the *molliora tempora fandi* prevail, it is at a good dinner; and it was upon the want of it that Coriolanus's friend Menenius laid the blame of all his faults with the mob:—

“He had not dined;

The veins unfilled, our blood is cold, and then

We pout upon the morning.”

Heaven knows, there was here no pouting; for, exclusive of the banquet before us, to which Mr. Manners did as much justice as myself, our different conversations had excited the good humour of us both: mine, from having witnessed such cultivated talents in my host; his, for having so well exercised them.

One reason more, in regard to myself, was the secret satisfaction I felt in the so unexpected discovery of my relationship to him, and the frank good-will with which he acknowledged it. This was repeated several times; for he never replenished his glass but he called me cousin, and wished our better acquaintance.

Of what might be the consequence of this, I had no precise, or indeed any idea; but I felt a sort of secret consciousness of something good that time might reveal, the nature of which was confused

but flattering (thanks to my sanguine temper), nor could I prevent a favourable vision of the world from rising in the distance to my view.

My reverie of a minute, upon this subject, when the departure of the servants left us to our wine and fruit, was interrupted by my host, who observed,

“ We talked before dinner of the force of early associations, to which, perhaps, from the few trifling instances I gave of them, you thought me a votary. What will you say when I tell you that it is to them I owe my being here—to the abandonment of a very different and much finer place in the north ? ”

“ I heard,” said I “ from the omniscient Gayford, that you preferred this, because you were born and bred here, to some fine seat you had elsewhere. ”

“ He was no more than right,” replied Mr. Manners. “ Black-down Castle, in Bolton-le-Moors, would look upon this with contempt, and I believe I am not a little despised, by men of supposed high minds, for having left it so soon to itself. What is worse, by the charitable world (which always sits in judgment upon other people’s motions, though ever so ignorant of them), I was summoned, tried, and found guilty of miserly stinginess, in leaving it for this less expensive, but happier abode. It was impossible, they said, for any one to be so swayed by the force of habit, or attachment to the scenes of his youth, as to prefer what they called a cottage, in comparison to a feudal castle. I ventured to dissent from their opinions. ”

“ And your residence here since, of course confirmed that dissent ? ”

“ It did,” said he ; “ for, say what one will of the attractions of grandeur and the enjoyments of wealth, one beat of the heart, occasioned by any fond or happy recollection inspired by either sight or sound, will make magnificence sink to nothing in the comparison. This old-fashioned, moated grange was the seat of my fathers ; a fair and comfortable provision for the younger branches of any family, however high. My mother, who, though an earl’s daughter, and ultimate heiress, was a model of moderation and unspoiled benevolence, made it the seat of happiness to all that belonged to her. It is true, the house is moderate, and near the road, and I approached the castle through an avenue half a mile long. There were there, also, gilded domes, walls painted *alfresco*, and numerous, though not over-convenient apartments within doors ; while herds of deer coursed an extended park without. In short, it was magnificent when you got to it ; but you had to traverse full five-and-twenty miles of the most odious, bleak, and dreary moors (whence the district took its name), to reach it. It was sunk in a vast dell, and surrounded closely by groves of black pine, the arms of which, like those of witches, seemed at the same time to embrace and blast you

with damp and mildew. It made me think myself a Caliban tormented by Prospero, racked with cramps, and all my bones filled with aches."

"In truth," said I, "the very description makes me shiver, and I am not surprised at the exchange."

"Why, without such a character as I have given it," answered he, "I believe I should have done the same; for it came to me too late. My uncle, Lord Badlesmere, died when I was long past forty; my tenants *depended* upon me, but could not *love* me. How should they? They never knew me when either they or I were in our youth, which brings all ranks together. I had never been at the place; it had not a single association like those which my heart loves to feel, while this comfortable grange was full of them. It was here I first loved a garden; here I first learned to read; here was first taught there was a God; here knew him in every tree and every flower that surrounded me. In that rivulet I first bathed; in that field mounted my first pony; in that copse first heard the nightingale."

"I think," said I, "you need not go on to account for your preference, or even your exchange."

"It was some time, however," continued he, "before I found out exactly what ailed me at Bolton-le-Moors. My name gave me a little feudal pride, and it promised to be amply gratified by the possession of the castle. I felt comparatively a grandee, yet I was not happy, and little imagined it was because I was too great. I passed my hours in gloomy magnificence, and all the worse for the want of that golden mediocrity which Horace talks of. I had no *necessity* for the employment which made all my little occupations at the grange so sweet. Every thing was done for me, and my servants seemed ashamed of me if I did any thing for myself. I revelled in company at home and abroad; for all my uncle's friends made a point of shewing their respect for his memory, by treating me as they did him—that is, never leaving me alone; and I soon found that, though I was lord of a castle, I had not the felicity of a home. I wanted those hours of the early morning, which, from the meditations they inspire, colour the whole day with cheerfulness. I wanted the freshness of the flowers which I myself had reared; the retired shades which I myself had planted: these always gave my mind composure. Would you believe it, too, that the first proof I had of how much I had lost by the exchange was the missing the children of the village flocking past my windows, just after milking time in the morning, with their cans and pitchers for the skimmed milk, which my mother always gave away? The sight was ever exhilarating, and the day all the better for it."

"But why," said I, "could not this be enjoyed at the castle as well as in the village?"

"In the first place, because there was no village, and conse-

quently no children. A landscape gardener, with much taste and no benevolence, had persuaded Lord Badlesmere to pull down the whole hamlet, where their ancestors and his had been reared together for two centuries with mutual benefit. In the next, I had become so much richer than my mother at the grange, that this little milk donation, being like so much water, gave me none of that self-satisfaction, though small, which one feels in giving up something to the wants of another. Besides, to admit a parcel of little paupers so near so noble a residence disturbed the ideas of respect due to my lord's gentleman, if not to my lord himself; and all such were chased away, either by the dogs or the stable-boys, who had orders to that effect."

I loved my host for these sentiments.

"Still, however," said I, "you could not be in a desert, as you revelled, you say, in company."

"*Hinc illæ lacrymæ*," returned he. "Though I thought the only good of those eternal moors would be to keep off visitors, not only that failed, but I was forced to return the visits. Oh, the yawns and shiverings I have had while counting the minutes, I may say the hours, which it took me to cross them; for there being no intervening post-houses, my horses were obliged to drag me slowly along; and when I got to the promised land, and was plunged into what I sought, the society of my country neighbours, as they were called, though thirty, and some of them forty miles off—alas! tell it not in Gath—the very thought of it makes me yawn at this distance of time."

Here he suited the action to the word so emphatically, that I burst out a-laughing, and could hardly ask him what there was in the recollection that so moved him.

"You," replied he, "who have had the good fortune to be unacquainted with any but the natural tone and manners of those of your own age, and of the same pursuits, can scarce imagine the torrent of dulness and constraint which you will sometimes be doomed to meet with in what is called society. You yet know nothing of *ennui*. But of all society, deliver me from that which presses you to earth in the country; from which there is no escape, and which you are bound by convention to undergo in a remote county. In town, you may choose; near town, you may shut yourself up if you please; nobody will mind you. There are enough, and to spare. But at Bolton-le-Moors——"

"O! pray, let us have it," said I, seeing him stop.

"Why, I told you," proceeded he, "that in settling there, though, as it were, obliged to do so, I found I had made a mistake, and exchanged real and natural, though homely interests, for glare, vanity, and complaisance, amounting indeed to flattery, but which was too artificial to do the heart good. All the country

came to see me, and I drove a-visiting in my coach and six to all the country. I received and gave two or three courses at dinner; I ate off plate, and my plate was admired. For all this, except when warmed with wine or politics, nothing hung so heavily as our dinners; and as for our evenings, they were dulness personified. A boarding-house at Bath could not be worse. Now and then a pretty Hebe of a girl would shew some nature; that is, as much as she dared. Her eyes would sparkle with what pleasure she could get, and I rejoiced at seeing natural cheerfulness; but for one quarter of an hour of this, there were two whole hours of flatness. The watches were out every ten minutes; the coachman had certainly made a mistake; and the moment of separation was the only pleasant one of the meeting."

"And yet you were here among those of your own rank, station, and fortune?"

"Yes; they were, as Pope describes his country friends to Wycherley, 'a sort of modest, inoffensive people, who neither have sense, nor pretend to any, but enjoy a jovial sort of dulness. They are commonly known in the world by the name of honest, civil gentlemen.' Yes; there were Sir Harry, and my lord, and half-a-dozen of my ladies; but then they (particularly my ladies) were out of their element in a country drawing-room. There were no interests where there was nobody to court, no turn to serve. The men could not continue to talk politics, or fox-hunting, or yeomanry, after they had left the dining-room; and the women, after they had surveyed each other's dresses, and mentally sat in judgment upon the expense or taste which each had displayed, were quite done. Nor was this relieved by, for the most part, very bad music. Never shall I forget the torture I suffered from the constant repetition of that exquisite piece of tedious flatness, even when well sung,

'Angels ever bright and fair.'

Here it was intolerable, yet called for in every party, and once, to my consternation, encored by a man of ten thousand a-year, who could not be refused. Heaven forgive me! I have hated him ever since. It was only when the old people got to cards, or the young ones, after a thousand abortive attempts, got really into a quadrille (in which dulness still pursued them), that the time seemed to get on. At all other times these social parties gave me the idea of the Dutchman, who, making a great noise by jumping over the chairs, and being asked what he meant by it, answered with great *naïveté*, '*J'apprends à être vif.*'"

This produced a hearty laugh on my part; indeed the whole description was ludicrous, though given in solemn sadness.

"All this," he proceeded, "often repeated, became at last a serious misfortune; the distance from neighbours protracted per-

force, with many of them, all visits for two or three days, and I found that to have five-and-twenty miles of moors between us did any thing but make Blackdown Castle come up to La Bruyère's idea of a solitude, '*Repos, retraite, et un endroit qui soit son domaine.*' On the contrary, I felt twenty times a-day that my whistling ploughman might say to me,

‘ A simple, rustic home of liberty
Is worth your honours in captivity.’

“ In fine, I discovered that the life I was leading suited not even my fortune, much less my habits; for my Lord Badlesmere, with less income than befitted an earl, had lived like a duke, and left me a revenue very disproportionate to the place. I gladly, therefore, returned to this my ‘rustic home of liberty,’ where I enjoy what, after all the vicissitudes of what is thought good fortune, is among the purest and most real sources of happiness, ‘*Sibi posse vivere, et Musis, et cum paucis non fallacibus amicis, in agelli angulo, consenescere*’¹. ”

Here he ceased, and the Dutchman, who was learning *à être vif*, at which I had indulged a laugh, was forgotten in the seriousness with which these last sentences were uttered. The story and the bottle were now ended, and coffee coming in, put an end for the present to our pleasant conversation.

The after-dinner stroll now came on, for Manners was one of the first who had emancipated himself from the custom, so subversive of all good-feeling and all rational enjoyment, which in those days prevailed, of exciting, and therefore deteriorating both the mind and constitution by more wine than nature required. We talk of our good old forefathers! Surely they were good old brutes, worshippers of the baneful cup of Comus,

“ Whose pleasing poison
The visage quite transforms of him who drinks,
And the inglorious likeness of a beast
Fixes instead, unmoulding reason's mintage.”

We talk of modern amusements, rail-roads and steam—how far more beneficial to our happiness is the improvement in our manners, which makes it now a reproach instead of a glory for a gentleman to be drunk.

It was not yet quite evening (for fifty years ago we did not dine at eight o'clock in the country), but the sun was approaching his final declension:

‘ Et jam summa procul villarum culmina fumant:
Majoresque cadunt altis de montibus umbræ².’

¹ ‘To be able to live to one's self, and in the corner of one's farm grow old in the cultivation of the Muses and a few sincere friends.’

² “And now in the distance the cottage chimneys begin to smoke, and a lengthened shade falls from the lofty hills.”

The air was balmy, and the scent of the flowers seemed to perfectionate our sensual enjoyments. We had approached the opening into the fields, where half-a-dozen beautiful cows were winding in a waving line from the milking byre to their night pasture, and made the air resound with their lowing.

My classical host, after contemplating them a few minutes, broke out with—

“Aut in reducta valle mugientium
Prospectat errantes greges.”

“This,” said he, “is the most soothing time of the day, and this the most soothing of sights. It gives you the idea of a delicious plenty afforded by nature, accompanied with independence and perfect innocence, insuring rest and tranquillity. How happy when the evening of life resembles it.”

“It is superior to the morning,” said I, “in pleasurable sensations.”

“Not quite,” observed he, smiling; “for content as I am with my evening, I perhaps should have no objection to a little of your youth. And yet I am not sure; for one would not willingly go out again to sea when the haven is in sight. I am not a Lord Ligonier.”

I asked his allusion, and he told me that Lord Ligonier, when at eighty, found himself still a man of pleasure, and was asked for promotion by his relation, the present General Lascelles. “I am three-and-twenty,” said Lascelles, “and yet I am but a cornet.” “Be thankful, you young dog,” said Ligonier. “I am Commander-in-chief, but would change with you to-morrow.” “Now this I am not prepared to say, even to you.”

“I don’t know why you should,” said I, “for you seem the picture of happiness, and deserve to be so. Virgil, in the eclogue you quoted just now, must certainly have seen you and this retreat in a vision, when he wrote the lines,

‘Fortunate senex, ergo tua rura manebunt;
Fortunate senex, hic inter flumina nota,
Et fontes sacros, frigus captabis opacum.’¹”

Mr. Manners nodded his head, and seemed by no means ill-pleased with the allusion.

“I know not,” said he, “if I have a right to be addressed by the epithet of Fortunatus; but if a capability, in my old age, of enjoying such a scene as this, and being alive in a summer evening to the pleasures of sacred fountains and the cool shade, will justify the appellation, perhaps it may belong to me. The situation, prospects, hopes, and fears of an old man, particularly in reference to

¹ ‘Fortunate old man, whose farm is preserved to you, and who, amidst your well-known streams and sacred fountains, enjoyest the cool shade.’

and comparison with youth, have not, as you may suppose, passed unexamined by me."

"The result," said I, "must be edifying, and much I doubt if you, at least, can justify the character of

'Strict age and sour severity.'"

"Thanking you for the compliment," returned he, "I know not if that character is a fair one, for it is our own fault if we are not as happy as you; though the happiness of youth, from the exuberance, nay, the riot of its hopes, is so great, that if we had not even still richer, though not such riotous hope, there would be no sort of comparison between us. With this richer hope, I would not yield you one jot of happiness more than a healthy old man might enjoy."

"This is very charming," said I, "and I quite long to be enlightened on so interesting a subject."

"Why, it is not," replied he, "the loss of youth, in regard to its sensual enjoyments, that forms the regrets of old age; for the latter may have quite as much positive enjoyment as the former."

Seeing me look surprised, "Nay, start not," said he, "for I must tell you what perhaps you must be old before you know. Quiet, rest, and tranquillity, are quite as happy, if not happier things than excitement. It is the less and less prospect of the happiness continuing that embitters the last years of those who are quitting the world, *if they have no consolation in doing so*. Could a man of seventy, at ease in body and mind, look forward to fifty years more in the same condition he is in, as you young men do, (though far from being sure of it), he would be quite as happy, perhaps happier, in his arm-chair, than you in a fox chase."

"Rather a tame sort of happiness," said I.

"But still happiness," answered he, "and of the most demonstrable kind. For, let me ask you, in your late journeys on foot, how many miles did you make in a day?"

"Sometimes twenty."

"And when you came to your inn of an evening, what did you do?"

"Nothing, for I was too tired, and sought repose."

"Just so; and you found that the repose of doing nothing after a long journey was a great pleasure. So says Milton:

'Refreshment after toil, ease after pain.'"

"I see what you mean," said I.

"I am glad of it," replied he, "for you now see that my arm-chair in the evening of life is as great a pleasure as your evening repose after a long day's journey. But even in youth, healthy existence—that is, a tranquil enjoyment of it in the simple act of breath-

ing—is (thanks to Him who so ordained it!) positive enjoyment, and in itself enough. Besides, as I once heard one old man, an ex-cabinet minister, say to another, who was lamenting that there was nothing left in the world worth enjoying,—‘You forget that we can eat our dinners and sleep on our beds.’

“Of the efficiency of one of these sources you will perhaps need no conviction, after what you witnessed in me two hours ago. This I own is rather unsentimental; but add to it what I am supposing in the case, the power of meditation, reading, and agreeable conversation, and do not flatter yourself that an old man is not as happy as a young one. If he has fewer desires, he has fewer mortifications, for most innocent nature never meant

‘As if her children should be riotous with her abundance.’”

“All that is beautifully true,” observed I; “but are we wrong in supposing that there are evils peculiar to old age,

‘The lean and slipper’d pantaloon,
The hose, a world too wide for his shrunk shank?’

“But I will not go on, except indeed that I recollect a denunciation of old age by Rousseau, which cannot offend *you*, at least, who are greatly too far off it to be affected by it.”

“O! even if I were not,” said he, “by all means let us have it.”

I hesitated a little; but, urged by him, at length repeated,

“Vieux, on le méprise, on l’évite,
Mauvaise humeur, infirmité,
Toux, gravelle, goutte, pituite,
Assiégent sa caducité.”

Far from taking this ill, it moved his laughter.

“And pray,” said he, “thou representative of most immaculate and unimpeachable youth, do not the world despise and avoid empty young coxcombs, who bore you with their self-sufficient and boisterous spirits, as well as languishing old men? Are you never in bad humour? Have you no infirmities? no coughs, gravel, or even gout? I reject this monopoly of disease and ill-humour by age; though I grant you the other terrors are too faithfully described; not only the ‘shrunk shank,’ but ‘the big manly voice, turning again towards childish treble pipes;’ and even the ‘second childishness,’

‘Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans every thing.’

“Yet these last, by making us wish for death, would reconcile us to it; and even these last do not proscribe mind. These, however, are extreme cases, for seldom indeed do all these privations befall one individual, and leave him without any resources. Perhaps the resources left have even heightened enjoyments to make up for

what is lost. Take my own example. God has taken away something, but has left me more. I am deaf, but I might have been blind. I cannot hear the blackbird, but I can enjoy this ample prospect, as much, or more than ever. I cannot walk twenty miles a-day, as you do ; but I can sit on a bench, and, better than you (because I feel it more), feel and adore the sun.

“ My gratitude for this is not only greater, as it ought to be, when I consider what I might be, but is of a more exquisite and warmer nature, and therefore makes me happier than the feelings upon it of a youth, who, seeing how common it is, looks upon it as a right. Be assured the frame of mind which old age thus generates, alone balances, nay, more than balances, all the gay carelessness of youth.

“ Let me return then to that with which I set out, and which alone I hold as a set-off against youth ; I mean a healthy old age, unburthened by conscience, having honourable retrospections, and alive to mental cheerfulness. With these, an old man need envy no young one.

“ One evil there is, I grant you, and that a severe one. The loss of friends, together with the prospect of being soon lost one's self. But besides that no young age can be insured against this, even here is consolation in hope—the hope of living again, and in a better world joining the loved beings who have gone before us. I thank God that, far from having parted with this hope, it has increased with my years, and in the indulgence of it I wait with calmness the approach of the ‘ inaudible and noiseless foot of Time.’ ”

I could not, and indeed wished not, to reply to this, for I felt both its force and its pathos.

A pause ensued, which, from its solemnity neither of us seemed inclined to interrupt, till, warming with his last sentiment, he asked me if I had ever seen some beautiful lines of Hughes, which he said should be written in letters of gold :

“ There let Time's creeping winter shed
His reverend snow around my head ;
And while I feel by fast degrees
My sluggard blood wax chill and freeze,
Let thought unveil to my fix'd eye
A scene of deep eternity,
Till, life dissolving at the view,
I wake, and find the vision true.”

CHAPTER III.

OF A VERY INTERESTING SUGGESTION MADE BY MR. MANNERS TO CLIFFORD.—HOW GLADLY HE RECEIVED, AND HOW SOON HE FORGOT IT, IN CONTEMPLATING THE MOON.

“How sweet the moonlight sleeps upon this bank.”

In such a night Medea gathered the enchanted herbs that did recover old Æson.

SHAKSPEARE.—*Merchant of Venice*.

AT the close of our conversation in the last chapter, a servant announced tea in the library, and I suppose I looked surprised, as there were no ladies in the house and Manners had not ordered it; so he thought it necessary to explain.

“I see,” said he, “your wonder at this: but it is only one other accompaniment of the solitary life. For where we are not bound to take note of time by any superior demand upon it, unless we make one for ourselves, the machine would run down of itself. The terms *soon* and *late* would be lost, and the hours of the house would run wild. This I found after I finally settled myself here, in the sort of *robe de chambre* life I lead. The robe would never be off my back, if there was not a regular order of things, and times for doing them. At first, the cook, the butler, the groom, never knew where to have me, nor I them; so I drew up a code of laws for our common government; the time of all meals, for all persons, was enacted, and exactly kept to; and since that we have done pretty well. I am quizzed for this, too, among other things, by my charitable neighbours, who sneer at me as a bore of an old man, who moves by clockwork. I answer, I wish their lives were half as regular as my clock. So now you see why we have been summoned to tea, and why I dare not disobey; all which, whether you approve or disapprove, you may put down to the account of Solitude.”

“I shall be an adept, I have no doubt, at last,” said I.

“An adept as to theory, if you will, but not in practice. You must put off that to this time forty years.”

This not unnaturally led to inquiries as to my professional views; “for, undoubtedly,” said he, “you must have some; though I suppose, from your Sedbergh exhibition at Queen’s, and your election afterwards to Maudlin, they are clerical; a college tutor and a country parson, like your master, Fothergill; but, heavens! how that man was thrown away.”

“He does not think so himself,” observed I; “nor do I believe he would have been half so happy in the actual world, much as he knows of its theory. He failed, you know, in endeavouring to become a politician under Lord Castleton.”

“He did so; though Castleton both loved and respected him; but he had not the *esprit liant*. I trust you will not imitate him in that.”

“You know Lord Castleton, then?”

“Yes, full well; for not only am I his near relation through the Badlesmeres, but when I was in the world we were great political friends. He was one of the few whom I really believed honest in his ambition; and he used to say I was one of the few who was sincere in my love of privacy. He sometimes writes to me, and more than once has unbent for four-and-twenty hours at a time at the Grange. By the way, I wish you knew him. He has often complained to me that he never could attach a young man of parts to his service, for his own sake; or who did not acquire such a vast opinion of himself, that he was forced to dismiss him in his own defence. Do you know, it has already struck me, once or twice, in the course of our conversations, that you would just suit him. You are well born, which he likes; well-looking, which he likes; and *ingenui vultus puer*, which he very much likes. Your romance and your sentiment would be no drawback, for he once had them himself; and your apparent scholarship would be an additional recommendation, for he not only had, but retains, a considerable portion of literature to this day.”

I was absolutely bewildered during this speech. I could not believe my new-found kinsman in earnest: my colour came and went; and Fothergill's suggestions to the same effect rushing into my mind, I became dizzy with the thousand notions which, thus repeated, they engendered.

Mr. Manners seeing me agitated, asked the cause of it; and having recovered myself, I fairly told him my surprise at the extraordinary coincidence between him and Fothergill upon this point.

“Surprising, but not displeasing, I trust,” said he.

“Very far from it,” replied I, “if I were only worthy of it. But obscure, ignorant of the world, particularly of the high world, its manners, maxims, and conventions; what would become of me? and even if your unaccountable sudden feeling of favour towards me, which I know not how I can have acquired——”

“O!” interrupted he; “truce with your modesty here, at least, though it might become you in the presence of a perhaps jealous patron. As to your obscurity, a demy of Maudlin, with the prospect of a fellowship, belongs absolutely to *noblesse*; and such obscurity as Addison set out with cannot be very detrimental. Then you are a De Clifford and a Bardolfe:

“A noble young fellow three ages ago.”

Last and not least, you will please to observe, you are my first cousin, only three or four times removed. The devil's in it, should Castleton have a vacancy in his *bureau*, if he would fill it obscurely.

in choosing you. I must only lay my wits together with Fothergill's, to see how to bring it about."

Then, seeing that I was still agitated, and that the evening was fast closing in, he said, "There, I have spoiled your contemplative walk home to-night, notwithstanding that rising moon, which will make me envy you the chequered shade she will cause in Asher's Wood. But go, and enjoy it if you can, notwithstanding the dream of the world I have raised in you. I suppose you will feel a little like Gil Blas, after hearing the momentous words—'You now belong to the king!' But love the moon, notwithstanding: think of what I have told you, and pray dine with me again to-morrow."

At these words he playfully almost pushed me out of the room, and, as I passed the open window, called out, "If you hear any bells, though only a sheep-bell, in your way home, think of one Whittington, and that they cry,

' Turn again, Whittington,
Lord Mayor of London town.' "

With this prophetic distich in my ears, I certainly, at first, thought much of London town; but the dream did not last long. For though, for the first two or three hundred yards, my fancy conjured up many visions of the interesting novelties of public life, it was scarcely possible for them to continue in the pastoral village of Binfield.

The bean-flowers, that richest and sweetest of scents, which here flourished in profusion, and perhaps gave its name to the village, again perfumed the air, and filled all the senses with a soothing voluptuousness wholly incompatible with dreams of ambition. It was impossible to think of courts in such a garden.

The day, too, had for some time sunk, and given place to what has well been called, "a universal gravity." Twilight herself seemed departing, and the gleams of her silver tints, after having lingered a minute on the higher objects, as if to claim a last farewell, dropt suddenly from the sight, and were gone almost as soon as seen.

There was a moral in this which effectually banished worldly desires; for it made me reflect how uncertain is our hold on all we may most love.

I gave way therefore to holier aspirations; and forgot Lord Castleton and his *bureau* in far different and higher speculations.

And now the moon had begun to array herself in melting softness. Was it possible for the mind to dwell upon artificial grandeur, or any power belonging to man, under such surpassing proofs of creative splendour in the Omnipotent? No heart could resist its influence; and mine forgot this lower world, in thinking of His power and beneficence who dwelt above.

What made the scene more rich and seductive, was the gradual majestic advance of this all-diffusing orb, from faint beginnings to the wide-spreading influence of universal brightness. For at first, scarce seen in the horizon, the effect upon surrounding objects was not so great, and the hemisphere remained for a while only just visible. But soon rising higher and higher, she shot forth all her glories,

“ Firing the proud tops of the eastern pines.”

This made me, her worshipper, bow down, senseless to any influence but her own; for while the whole vault of heaven was cloudless, every ray told upon the surrounding landscape, and I never so much felt the exact as well as sublime description of him who excelled in sublimity and exactness:—

“ Now Heav’n in all her glory shone, and roll’d
Her motions as the great first mover’s hand
First wheel’d her course; earth in her rich attire
Consummate, lovely, smiled.”

No; I could not think of Lord Castleton, fearing, if I did so, heaven and earth would rebuke me for my selfishness.

And yet with all this rapture (for it was no less) in regard to this lovely planet, I somehow or another felt a want for her. She seemed too dependent upon another, whose deputy only she was, when I would have had her a queen, with power self-derived. She seemed also *alone*, and to feel that she was so. Peerless, as she rode through the boundless ether, I wished to give her a companion. She appeared a widow, or an orphan, or both. The happiness she diffused to others seemed wanting to herself.

These thoughts possessed me so much, that I invoked the Muse upon them, and before I got to Oakingham, they had arranged themselves in some stanzas, which perhaps I might venture to record, but that long—long since they were composed, the same thought was embodied by a superior genius, whose premature and most affecting death has enhanced the interest of all her productions¹. Among the sweetest of them is the sonnet I allude to, which the reader may pass over if he pleases; but if he reads it, I think he will thank me.

SONNET TO THE MOON.

The moon is sailing o’er the sky,
But *lonely* all, as if she pined
For something of companionship,
And felt it was in *vain* she shined.

Earth is her mirror, and the stars
Are as a court around her throne;
She is a beauty, and a queen,
But what of that? she is *alone*.

¹ L. E. L.

Is there not one, not one to share
Thy glorious royalty on high?
I cannot choose but pity thee,
Thou lovely orphan of the sky.

I'd rather be the meanest flow'r
That grows, my mother earth, on thee,
So there were others of my kin
To blossom, bloom, and die with me.

Earth, thou hast sorrow, grief, and death,
But with these better could I bear,
Than guide and rule yon radiant sphere,
And be a *solitary* there.

With such reflections as these, in which perhaps there was a tinge of melancholy, though not unpleasing, I traversed the dewy lawns and still woods (too still, for it was too late in the year for the nightingale) that lay between Binfield and Oakingham. What they wanted in melody, however, they endeavoured to make up in freshness, which was emitted from every leaf and every tuft and wild-flower which spread itself to the influence of the soft night air. The effect upon the nerves was perfect, and when I saw the lights and buildings of Oakingham, I felt displeased, for they took me back to the world.

Yet I soon remembered that for that world I was destined; and the Royal Oak, where a weekly club still lingered, after a market-day, made me forget my romance; and the bells of the church, on which the ringers, according to good old English custom, were exercising their skill, in I don't know how many bob majors, made me recollect, though without superstition, the allusion of Mr. Manners to—"Turn again, Whittington."

Having got me to bed, I gave myself up to serious reflection on the (to me) strange events of the day;—the discovery of my relationship to Mr. Manners, acknowledged by him in so frank and flattering a manner that it was incontestable; the accomplished mind of that gentleman; his great and sudden favour towards me, and the extraordinary prospect he held forth as the possible result of it with Lord Castleton—all this made me resolve to write in detail to Fothergill, and shortly to my family. My bosom swelled with hope, and I fell into a sound and happy sleep, from which I did not wake for several hours.

The next day I executed my purpose, by giving my *quondam* tutor the whole history of my rencontre with his friend, and my obligations to that friendship in procuring me originally so much of his notice. I then detailed the wonder of our discovered connection; Mr. Manners' increased kindness in consequence; and, finally, the hope he had held out of some benefit which, with his (Fothergill's) assistance, it might procure for me with Lord Castleton.

From foreseeing that I should have to break in considerably upon the plan of my pedestrian tour, I wrote also to the person who had the care of my rooms at Maudlin, to send me, per coach, a strong reinforcement to my wardrobe.

To my father I communicated the acquaintance I had made with Mr. Manners, and the curious circumstance of the relationship ; but said nothing, for the present, of the prospect (distant as it was) of an introduction to Lord Castleton.

Having all these things in train, I began then to think of my engagement to return to the Grange, and once more took the road to Binfield. By way of variety, however, under my landlord's direction, I took a different course, by what is called the Forest-road, which (such is the beauty of this fairy land) was hardly less attractive than Asher's Wood itself.

CHAPTER IV.

THE DISAPPOINTMENTS IN THE FRIENDSHIPS OF A MAN OF THE WORLD, AS RELATED BY MR. MANNERS.—HIS ACCOUNT OF A MODERN PHARISEE, AND OF CERTAIN MODERN FEMALE CHARACTERS.—THE VISITING BOOK OF A LADY OF FASHION.—HIS OPINION OF THE PROFESSION OF AN AUTHOR.

It is a pretty mocking of the life.

Here is a touch ! Is't good ?

I'll say of it,

It tutors nature.

SHAKSPEARE.—*Timon of Athens*.

WHEN I first set out to re-visit the Grange, nothing promised fairer than the weather ; but the gathering of summer clouds, at first fleecy and light, and emitting a few heat drops, soon thickening into dark heavy masses, and pouring down torrents, compelled me to look for shelter.

I found it in one of the pretty cottages that throng the forest, the mistress of which, a well-looking young woman, beckoned me to her door, and begged me to come in. I did so, and found an epitome of neatness and comfort which always pleases. She had two children, whose appearance, as well as her own, exhibited the same neatness. Yet she was engaged in menial offices ; in fact, by the pots on the fire, preparing food for her little ones, and, as I supposed, her expected husband.

I asked if this was not the case, which brought a gloom over her countenance, when she told me she was a widow.

“So young ?” said I.

“Yes,” she replied ; and she and her babes might have sunk under it, for they had had misfortunes, and the creditors were hard

with them, and all her means had failed with her husband's life. "But God," said she, "raised me up friends."

As I liked this sort of conversation, I asked who? and she replied, "Two gentlemen in the neighbourhood, Sir William Thompson; who lived in the great house I had just passed, and Mr. Manners, of the Grange."

Struck a little with this, I wished to hear more of her benefactors, and as I needed no information as to Mr. Manners, inquired about Sir William.

"They be both good," replied the poor woman, "and will, I hope, both go to heaven for what they did for the widow and orphan; I am sure I should be the most ungratefulest wretch upon earth if I did not pray for them both, particularly Mr. Manners."

Here she became embarrassed, as if she had said something improper, and began to explain that she did not mean any thing particular by that against Sir William, for it was most true, that both were excellent gentlemen, and "God knows," she added, "to me have been blessed benefactors, for they preserved me and my infants from sinking beyond redemption: nor do I really know as to their goodness that there can be any difference between them, for both are good, and give away a deal of money; and yet——"

Here she paused again, as if in thought, and fearful to go on.

"And yet what?" said I, wishing to hear her story.

"O! I am afraid I am very ungrateful, and therefore very wicked, to make the least distinction between these good gentlemen, who have both wiped the widow's tears, and comforted her and her babes against the wind and cold, when they had no house, nor bread to eat."

At this she looked around her neat and warm apartment, where every thing was so comfortable.

"No," she proceeded, "Sir William has even done more for us, as to money, than Mr. Manners; and I must be a bad creature to like one better than t'other, if indeed I do so."

Here again she looked rather distressed, as if taking herself to task, and sighed not a little.

"My good woman," I observed, desirous to encourage her not to think ill of herself, "I am sure one who seems so sensible to kindness, and so grateful, can have no reason for self-blame."

"Ah! Sir," she replied, "I believe it is because I am so sensible to kindness that I feel I do like one better than the other; and that's what makes me so angry with myself; for I am not more grateful to Mr. Manners, though I cannot help liking him best; and I am sure I pray God to bless them both, for both deserve it."

A tear stood in her eye as she said this, and as she wiped it away, she added—

"God forgive me, I have been very foolish to talk so. I hope,

sir, you are not a friend to Sir William. I am sure I would rather die than offend him after all he has done for me."

To comfort her, I told her I was not at all acquainted with Sir William, but was the friend of Mr. Manners, to whose house I was going; and I asked her to tell me why she preferred the one to the other, when both were so good.

"I am sure," answered she, "I be not able to tell, except that Mr. Manners be more kind-like—(no—that's not it neither, for Sir William, as I say, is very kind), but Mr. Manners be more free, and talks to me like a father, and planned my little garden for me himself, and often comes into the cottage and hears the children read; and when I first fell into misfortin, Sir William only sent his man to me, who rather huffed me; but Mr. Manners cum himself, and was as gentle as a lamb. Besides, though Sir William gave me a good deal of this furniture, I never saw him but once, for he seldom calls, and never comes in when he does, and always holds himself high; and his butler, who sometimes brings messages, be higher still. Poor folks can always distinguish these things by the pleasure or pain it give them."

"Well, my good woman," said I, "you have explained this perfectly well, and I can easily understand it; nor would Sir William, I dare say, himself take it ill, when he heard that Mr. Manners seemed like a father to you, which he must know *he* did not."

"O! Sir," she replied, "if you be going to Mr. Manners's, I hope you will not mention any thing I have said of him; but I must always love him as a pattern for all other gentlefolks."

The demeanour of this good creature really affected me, and gave me a good lecture to boot on the mistake of those who, however generous as to money, think that the mere giving it away suffices to all the requisites of charity. It gave me, too, the best comment on what St. Paul says upon the subject, "that though a man give all his goods to feed the poor, and hath not charity, it profiteth him nothing."

Let the many Sir William Thompsons there are, who give much of their abundance, but little of their kindness, think of the distinction made by this humble cottager between her benefactors, and do better.

I was thankful to the shower for having procured me a lesson I never forgot, and I conn'd it over and over during the rest of my fragrant walk to the Grange—more fragrant for the shower.

I found Mr. Manners enjoying it himself, and snuffing up the breath of his flowers with a pleasure that would have made a king envy him, and (without interrupting it by returning my salutation, but as if carrying on a previous conversation) he said,

"I allow this is very sensual, and yet it has mind in it too, for the sensuality is so mixed with elegance, that there is a refinement

in it, and the heart expands with grateful feeling, which always does good to the mind. Now that is not the case with a gross dinner, although we say grace for it; there is no sentiment in a ragout. But pray how did you escape the shower?"

It may be supposed I told him, with all the circumstances of my conversation with the cottager, not withholding all that she said of himself.

"Ah! poor Nancy," said he, "she might, as she says, have sunk if we had not done something for her: but Sir William did far more than I. Indeed he has a larger fortune, of which, perhaps, it would be better if he was not quite so proud. However, we must thank givers for the good they do, let them do it in what way they will."

"Sir William, however, appears to be charitable?"

"Why, yes! He also thinks himself humble; that is, he boasts of his humility; but it is not gospel humility, for he would never wash his disciples' feet; he is much too fastidious for such an office—one of what I call the ostentatious godly; in fact, a pharisee."

"Is he not really then benevolent?"

"Yes! but not after the pattern of the widow's mite; still less of Him he thinks he imitates. When he has well dined, and seen all the comforts of his house regulated, nothing wanting in any department—kitchen, cellar, stables, domestics, and all other appliances—his heart will really open, or appear to do so, and *whatever he has to spare*, he will give, for the Lord's sake; but he will not deny himself any one indulgence, to help a man in need."

"I comprehend," said I.

"Then as to his humility," continued Mr. Manners, "though he certainly gave poor Nancy money enough, as a sort of composition for his soul (as people formerly used to pay for masses), he never personally took any interest in her, because she was not fine enough in herself or her house for him to come in contact with them. Besides, it was beneath one of the Elect to descend to such an intercourse with a mere profane person. Hence, what he did, was always by deputy, in the person of Mr. Gamaliel, his butler, who gave the poor woman to understand, that from her too great anxiety in attending to her children, which interfered with her praying, she was, as Touchstone said to the Shepherd, 'in a parlous state, and would certainly be damned.' Indeed, his master says as much of me, because once, in an argument with him, I said I believed that Christ died for the whole world, if they obeyed his gospel, and not merely for half-a-dozen self-elect, who called themselves the godly."

"But let us leave such trumpery to themselves, and return to Whittington and his cat. I wrote to Fothergill last night to tell him you were here, and ask whether I was right in the opinion I had

formed of you ; for, to tell you the truth, I have been frequently taken in, both by men and women, from a sort of headlong disposition to rush at once into liking or disliking a person from the impulse of the moment, I hated Sir William the first time I saw him, though I could not tell why ; but I was not wrong there."

This account of himself did not too much delight me. I was afraid he might have repented, or would do so ; or that, with all his seeming sobriety and judgment, he might be capricious. In short, I felt alarmed, and by way of feeling the ground, ventured to ask if I might know how he, who appeared so judicious, could be so taken in ; and whether most by men or women ? In short, I wished him to develop himself, that I might better understand him.

"A very modest request," answered he, laughing ; "yet, as you are a kinsman, and about to launch into the world, I should have no objection to give you a few cautions, the result of a pretty long experience."

"I should desire nothing better," said I ; "and it would crown the obligations I already feel to you."

"It however requires time," said he, "for, from the nature of objects on which I have fixed my affections, I have passed my latter days with few disappointments ; trees, and blossoms, and books deceive little, so that I have, in fact, had 'no enemy but winter and rough weather.' I have, therefore, been little out of humour in consequence, and have nearly forgotten the whips and scorns of earlier, and more active life."

"But let me see. Oh ! there was the Duke of Brakenbury : I was one of his party in politics, and, he was pleased to say, a serviceable one. I helped him also in his county ; we were hand and glove ; I dined with him every week in town, and staid sometimes a month with him in the country. I attributed this at first to our political connection alone ; but he swore that had I no seat in parliament, or thought differently from him on public questions, he would have singled me out as a private friend. Well, he changed his party, though there was no change of measures ; I refused to follow him ; and he never spoke to me afterwards."

"There was another great man—a very great man—whose country interests I espoused with effect when at Bolton-le-Moor ; but I left the castle, and from that time to this we have been scarcely civil."

"What I think of, however, with most regret, is the separation from me by a man I really loved, from a low spirit of rivalry, and consequent ill usage, to which I thought him superior. We were college friends ; had many tastes in common ; and he was often my companion at the Warren-house, where we read together. Both were destined for public life, and embarked in it under the same leader—his Grace of Brakenbury ; but, from being more highly

connected, I was rather more among people of fashion. This was the first grievance ; for Dalton's weakness was an ambition to have a high place in that class. He married early, and his wife, the daughter of a nabob, shared, or rather went beyond him in this ambition ; and my mother, Lady Elizabeth, living then in town, our families became intimate. The jealousy I have mentioned soon shewed itself. The coronets, too often at our door, and too seldom at theirs, gave umbrage : we were watched at public places, and quarrelled with for only being noticed by our titled friends and relations, while they had none of the same rank to notice them. It absorbed us, they said, so much as to make us neglect them. This was sad nonsense. But I was in parliament—Dalton not. This was not so easily forgiven. I made a speech which got me some credit, but it was unfairly represented, and contemptuously criticized in one of the papers, with a laboured attempt to shew how much better it might have been, if certain omissions had not been made, and certain topics had been omitted. This was noted by the duke, and in discussing it with him, I gathered that he knew the criticism was by Dalton.

But criticism did not stop here. I was romantic ; and, to amuse myself, I wrote a romance which had a run. My friend turned author too, and wrote a political pamphlet, which nobody read. My romance was cut all to pieces, or thought to be so, in one of the Reviews. The review was laughed at, and the romance went through several editions. You will hardly believe that Dalton was the reviewer. Both he and his wife professed to admire my work ; but the lady, in her private circle, always thanked God that her husband did not write romances.

“ Could our friendship continue ? No ! we came to no explanations ; but Dalton, knowing I had discovered him, saved me the trouble, by never coming near me, and we gradually cooled off without any eclat.”

“ This is not much encouragement,” said I, seeing Mr. Manners had finished this part of his story, “ for a young gentleman beginning his progress in life. You said you had been taken in both by men and women. I trust you have no more cases against the men ?”

“ Few of any consequence, at least, to my happiness,” replied he ; “ and as to the higher criminals against the state or general morals, they belong to a higher class, and not to the category we are upon.”

“ I trust, then, you will come to the women, which, I own, I am curious to hear.”

“ If you expect a history of jilting and broken vows, you will be disappointed,” replied he ; “ and you will recollect I only said I had been not unfrequently deceived in the expectations I had too hastily formed as to the characters of individual females.”

“This will be quite interesting enough,” said I, “if you will but proceed.”

“It will not be very easy,” returned he, “if only from an *embarras des richesses*. For, though I do not agree with Pope, that

‘Most women have no character at all,’

but, on the contrary think they have so many different ones, that it is difficult to discover which prevails, it is, I dare say, from this very difficulty that my expectations have so often been disappointed.”

“Are they then of so many characters?” asked I.

“What says your own experience?”

“Alas!” returned I, “I have very little; hardly any; for the only female I ever studied, had none of this variety. She was ever as uniformly good, and gracious, as she was beautiful.”

“Indeed!” said my Mentor, and darted a penetrating look at me; but seeing I was embarrassed, very kindly observed, “you have been more fortunate in your study than I, for as far as I have seen, what Romeo says of love may be applied to the very nature of those who cause it—

‘O! any thing, of nothing first created!

O! heavy lightness! serious vanity!

Feather of lead! bright smoke! cold fire! sick health.’”

“But I long for the cases,” said I.

“Well,” returned he, “take the wife of one of my best friends, who, it must be owned, married her rather precipitately, having only seen her a month at Bath. Never shall I forget the rapture with which he informed me that he had found a temper of the most exquisite and cheerful softness, after his own heart. His days would be all sunshine; her smile was heaven, and she always smiled. To do him justice, this appeared no more than what she deserved, for there was an expression in her countenance and an alacrity of obligingness in her manner that made me think with him. I congratulated him sincerely, and only wished that heaven had made me such a one. In truth, she seemed angelic.”

“And was she not?”

“Why, yes; but her angelic nature was twofold; compounded of light, certainly, but also of darkness. For at the end of the first three months, I witnessed a quarrel that appalled me, and which, to recollect, appals me still. The dispute was not like that of Sir Charles and Lady Racket, whether a card played was a heart or a diamond¹, but whether she should have an opera box, though he proved he could not afford it. To call him a poor beggar, who ought not to have married her, was the least of what he suffered. Spite of my presence, she seemed quite transformed with passion. Her eyes

¹ See *Three Weeks after Marriage*.

flashed, her brow scowled; scorn, anger, and resentment amounting to hatred, fired every feature. I could not have believed the rancour of a fury could be so personified. Gentleness! Mercy on us! every look was changed to wrath, and those beautiful locks, which had so enchanted my friend, seemed turned to snakes. Fearing she would strike him, and unwilling to witness such unseemliness, I fled the house with precipitation. They accommodated matters as well as they could, but my friend was never his own man again, and never afterwards talked of sunshine,”

“This is deplorable,” said I. “I trust you had not many disappointments of this sort?”

“Not precisely of this spice of the devil under a fair outside,” answered he; “but enough of follies in the place of expected virtues, and too many of ridiculous caprice and inconstancy, in lieu of seeming friendship.”

“*Par exemple?*”

“The Lady Feignwell, who, from being my relation, I much studied. She was a peeress, not only of the highest fashion (which all peeresses are not), but perhaps *the* most accomplished woman in Europe. Highly cultivated; full of beautiful talents; music, dancing, drawing, languages; and when she pleased, the most engaging, I may say the most fascinating manners that ever belonged to the sex. But then, with her inferiors in station at least, she pleased to be engaging only in the country. There she was affable as well as elegant, and seemingly fond of her neighbours, upon whom she showered civilities, making all her attractions tell, so as to produce a conviction in their minds that she loved their society. She would do the honours of her table, and lay herself out a whole evening to *do the agreeable*, as if they were dukes and duchesses. She would call upon any particular family whom she was pleased to distinguish, three or four times a week, and would seem mightily hurt if not let in.

“If sometimes the cloven foot appeared in regard to some whose rusticity she did not like, and their John Bull feelings resented it, she would then vote the sentimental, make such touching apologies, and take such blame to herself, that her slights, coupled with such self-blame, got her more friends than her condescensions. With some she would go so far as to profess her delight in thinking of intercourse with them in town. Will it be believed, that *in* town, she fled them like a pestilence? her own doors always closed; theirs never knocked at; or if perchance they met, looks cold as ice proclaiming the altered feeling. Yet with all this, she was not perfect even in her own class of character.”

“How so?”

“I have told you she was, or thought herself, sentimental; affected the affable and condescending, though the farthest from it

possible. Her waiting-maid (servants soon find us out) knew this, and having had a violent quarrel with her, purloined an old visiting book, with annotations in her own hand, which she, the waiting-maid, had often seen, and thought she could turn to account. Take some of the specimens ; for though not printed, they were shewn, and as I was then admitted among the scandal-mongers, I was allowed a sight of them. In each page, and opposite each name, there were what were intitled notes, as follows :—

‘ Mrs. Chitty.—Vulgar, but good (very good in the country). I shall let her remain ; but on no account visit in town.

‘ Lady Hatchlands.—Hateful, but the fashion. I should like to drop, but shall be forced to keep her, on account of her cousin, the duke. I wish dukes would never marry commoners.

‘ Miss Colebrook.—Poor, but an excellent toady, and useful *pro-neuse*. Keep her too, though she *does* ask for tickets too often.

‘ Lady Dumbleton.—Too pushing for a person merely rich. *Will* know one at the opera, all I can do. Besides, has a heap of odious relations. To cut them all dead. No matter what they say.

‘ Duchess of Carberry.—A bore—but a duchess. Must remain.

‘ Mr. Smirk.—An author and a lion, writes beautifully, but wears thirds and knee-buckles. Won’t do.

‘ Mrs. Saltoun.—My earliest bosom friend : used to be very fond of her ; but she married a city physician. Cannot possibly go so far.

‘ Evelina.—Another early and dear friend. But she missed that match with Lord B. I was so set upon, and is now an old maid, with neither fortune nor connections. Very hard, but must be denied when she calls.’

“There were many more entries,” said Mr. Manners, “but this is enough to shew the effrontery of the vanity of Lady Feignwell ; and yet she was weak enough to be annoyed at the exposure, and this is what made me say she was not perfect in her class. To be a true heroine in her way, she ought to have been impenetrable to feeling. But what do you think of the picture?”

“It astonishes me,” said I ; “she was as you said, worse than frivolous. What did her country neighbours do when she returned among them?”

“Despised and laughed at her—which, to my surprise, annoyed her still more. No ; you see she was not perfect.”

“Were there many more like her?”

“So many, that when I had made them all out, it went far to make me take the leave I did of artificial life.”

“One class of your cases, however,” said I, “still remains ; and as you are giving me the benefit of your experience, I trust you will not think it impertinence if I remind you of it.”

“You mean,” returned he, “when real friendship has been wounded, intimacy dropped, opinion changed, and esteem undermined. It is certain this did not attend Lady Feignwell, whose glitter, perhaps, dazzled me, but for whom I neither felt friendship, high opinion, or esteem. The case I alluded to was certainly far different. And yet I was wrong to call it a disappointment of *expectation*, for expectation had been thoroughly realized, and those who are in my mind had not only fulfilled, but gone beyond it. They were a noble pair, whom I knew from youth upwards; the lady before her marriage. ‘Her father loved me, oft invited me:’ I felt honoured by his notice, and loved the whole family. Our mutual kindness, indeed, lasted for some time, and to her and her husband some of my happiest years were owing. Their doors opened at my approach; with them there was always the feast of reason as well as other feasts, and to both I seemed ever welcome. Yet all this changed—not by degrees, not for accountable reasons, not from change of circumstances, but abruptly like a sudden death.”

“How could this be?”

“I suppose from change of character in them, and of habits and powers of amusement in me.”

“Amusement!”

“Yes; for they, the lady especially, seemed to plunge deeper and deeper in worldly distractions; and though every hour ought to have made her more and more independent of them (which, from her accomplishments and a large family, she was formed to be), advancing life only made her more and more studious of its artificial enjoyments. In the splendour of her lot, therefore, she forgot her younger days, and those earlier friends, who seemed once to have made them sweet?”

“Forgot her younger days! was she then a *parvenue*?”

“Oh, no! Had she been so, her change would have been more intelligible. As it was, it was sheer caprice, and devotion to worldly objects—to fashion, show, and dissipation. These, in her amiable youth, she was above, and one would have thought her mind would have soared to something higher as she grew older; but she became only more and more devoted to the ‘fantastic tricks which make the angels weep.’”

“And in this you did not imitate her?”

“No; and as I could not follow her track, but aimed at something better, in doing so I lost, as I said, the power of amusing; and, as I had thrown myself out of politics, all other power ceased at the same time. In short, for truth must be told, I was forgotten, and laid aside as a useless piece of lumber.”

“Astonishing!” said I. “What, without a fault? without neglect on your part? without change of life, or local separation? Again, I say, how can such things be?”

"Ask the world, and this foolish woman," replied my friend.

The subject now dropped, though (perhaps reverting to it) he added soon after, "What I have said ought to prepare you for stranger things than this—in fact, whether in political or private friendships, you must look to be drawn on, or drawn off, like a pair of gloves, as convenience, humour, or change of views may dictate."

Here Mr. Manners ceased; and, I know not why, but this last part of our conversation made me more serious, or, perhaps I might say, uneasy, than any other I had had with him: for, if such a man, with so much mind, cultivation, good breeding, as well as good birth—instructed in all the usages and conventions of men, independent, and even rich withal—if such a man could, as he said, be dropped, and that for nothing, by one of his oldest friends, what was I to expect, or how escape! Far better, I thought, to recur to my original destination, the church, and a fellowship, or at worst a village curacy; and so I told my adviser.

"No;" said he. "Unless you feel an almost apostolical zeal and dedication of yourself to this arduous (for it is an arduous) career—unless you have really that *call*, which the Articles require, and to which all pretend, though so few feel it—the church shall have none of you. You shall not be one of those

'Who, for their bellies' sake,
Creep, and intrude, and climb into the fold.'

"With sincere conviction, and real holiness of purpose, there is no character so holy as a Christian churchman; his very presence inspires veneration, and with it gladness. Be one of these, and welcome; but if you are, nothing worldly must come near you. Thrones, palaces, and purple, must not be in your thoughts. I would rather you were a clerk, at a hundred a-year, or, what is worse, get your bread as one of those *pauvres misérables* in this country, the men of letters, than that you should be a trading clergyman."

"Amen," said I; "but as to men of letters, whom you designate under the cruel appellation you have used, how can the dwellers in the flowery regions of literature be miserable? You might as well call the denizens of your beautiful forest here by the same epithet."

"My good cousin," replied he, smiling, "you have, I see, a great deal more to learn than you are aware of, and friend Fothergill, after all, has taught you more of books than the technicalities of the professions of men. Perhaps, in the quiet walks of his college, with all the independence of academical learning, he was under a happy ignorance of the cruel fate of those who are used (and used hardly) as mere instruments or tools of literature. I suppose

it never occurred to him to talk to you of the happiness of a book-seller's hack?"

"As I never thought of being one," said I, "he had no occasion. But what is there so terrible in it?"

"Ask the word itself," replied he, "for what implies more misery? To be worked to death; to be imperiously treated by one probably one's inferior in all endowments of mind and education; to be lorded over, and allow one's self to be so, from the consciousness that our employer has a better dinner than we have, or that, without him, we should have no dinner at all! Is not this enough to break the spirit of the proudest heart? and would not a potato in a garret, with liberty to move, speak, and look as we listed, be a kingdom to it? When first I heard that villanous word pronounced, all this rushed into my mind."

"And when and how was this?"

"In the back-shop of a very eminent man, who by skill and capital had achieved what they always will in this great country, and who, in a worldly view, might fairly enough felicitate himself on his superiority to those who were in his pay. But not the less did it shock me when applied, as it was, to a gentleman of first-rate education, who had spent his all in qualifying himself for a learned profession, in which, not from want of proficiency, but the accidents which attend all professions, he had failed. But thus it is in the lottery of the world. One man shall be taken from flogging the *derrière* of a noble or plebeian schoolboy one day, and placed in the House of Lords the next; while another, with equal, perhaps superior learning, shall drag on a wearied existence, 'passing rich on forty pounds a year.' So here, a gentleman who from his attainments and industry was qualified, if fortune had so pleased, to be a Lord Chancellor, was reduced (because fortune did not so please) to submit to be called a bookseller's hack.

"What can the admirer of learning and genius do, when he thinks of the plate of victuals sent from Cave's table to Johnson, *impransus* (as he signed himself)—what but weep? O! believe me, I have been more than once ready to do so when I have seen a starveling author alongside of a fat bookseller, and compared their respective intellects with their respective persons."

"Your account, said I, "of these children of the Muses makes one not in love with them. And yet I have sometimes thought there must be that in the creative fancy of an author, to say nothing of his pleasure if he succeeds, that must make the occupation very agreeable."

"Agreed, provided you make it a recreation, not a business; provided you voluntarily follow it as a mental exercise, not be forced to it to pay a milk-score. The wanderer of Parnassus ought, as you have hinted, to be as free as the denizen of the forest. He should

roam at large, or lay his careless limbs under whatever tree he likes. Compel him to be always climbing, or drive him into the path in which he is to tread, his pleasure and his powers are gone. In plainer language, the man whose food is forced upon him, nauseates and rejects it, whatever its flavour. No ; *court* the Muse, but seek not to *marry* her ; or it may fare with you as it has with many a married couple :—‘ when poverty comes in at the door, love flies out of the window.’ ”

It is astonishing what an impression all this made upon me, and how well afterwards in the world I came to remember it.

CHAPTER V.

OF A GREAT CHANGE IN MY PROSPECTS.—CHARACTER OF LORD CASTLETON,
A MINISTER COMME IL Y EN A PEU.

God send him well !
The court's a learning place.

SHAKSPEARE.—*All's Well That Ends Well.*

THE disquisitions which ended the last chapter were interrupted by the loud blast of a horn at the outer gate.

“ It is the post,” said my host, “ always an important, perhaps the most important, feature of a day in solitude. It brings you back to the world, for which, with all our philosophy (as befitting the old apothegm of *homo sum*), we probably have always a sort of sneaking kindness. Come, let us see what it has brought us.”

At this he took the bag from his butler, and, unlocking it, “ What have we here ? ” said he, examining a seal, “ a coronet ? and, I protest, the Castleton arms ! What can be in the wind ? I hope he has not resigned.”

“ I hope not,” echoed I to myself.

“ By my faith, no ; ” continued Mr. Manners, smiling as he went over the lines, till at last he exclaimed, “ By Jupiter, this is the most extraordinary coincidence, as to time and wishes, that ever I met with.”

“ May I ask in what ? ” said I, on tenter-hooks with curiosity and interest.

“ You certainly may,” answered he, “ for it shall go hard with us if you may not be much concerned in it. In a word, his last confidential *élève* and *protégé*, Mr. Wilmot, is promoted, and leaves him, and he does me the honour to consult me about a young *roué* of a relation of mine, whom I mentioned to him a year or two ago, but who has since, from being plunged in perpetual scrapes, some of them disgraceful, lost all chance of success, at least here. Not a

small part of the coincidence is, that he tells me he has written to Fothergill on the same subject, having, as he said, long resolved to look no more to the idlers who throng the *pavé*, depending upon the strength of their connections to be pushed into situations for which they are not fit. Now, my good friend, between your cousin Fothergill and your cousin Manners, I think it will be hard if we do not place you on Mr. Wilmot's stool in the *bureau* of this eminent minister and accomplished gentleman, the Earl of Castleton."

His countenance shewed a pleasure as he said this, which left me no doubt of the sincerity of his intentions; and the remembrance of that benevolent and animated countenance, thus fraught with zeal and kindness to the stranger he had so warmly, yet so remarkably taken up, was always the most striking of the many *mementoes* I cherish of this excellent person.

Yet my heart quaked not a little at the news thus communicated. I did not know how to look. At first I thought he was playing upon me; but that his manner forbade. I then fancied I was in a dream, and I was some time before I could answer.

"You seem not to like my post," said he.

"No; I am only astonished and lost what to think of it; and what most puzzles me is, to know how almost to understand, certainly how to thank you for this wonderful good-will."

"If that be all," returned he, "we will put off thanks to some other time. At present we must act; and so while I write to my lord, do you write to Fothergill. He by this knows you are here, and under what circumstances, and of course that I have been applied to as well as himself. He will, of course, too, join his recommendation to mine, and we must then rest upon our oars."

With this we both sat down to a writing apparatus, and concocted our letters. He inspected and approved of mine, but he would not shew me his, saying he wished to spare my blushes.

The letters were dispatched, and it is not easy to describe the state of intense interest, a compound of hope and fear, which possessed all my nerves till the answer from the earl arrived.

In two days, during which I was domesticated at the Grange, it arrived, short, pithy, and sweet. "If," said he, "Mr. De Clifford is half what you say, I beg the favour of his coming to town directly; for though I am quite alive to what you say of the shortness of your acquaintance with him, and might fear something from your romance, yet Fothergill's letter in answer to mine, which I received by the same post as your's, and which recommended Mr. De Clifford, without any communication with you, has set me quite at ease on that point."

Manners, on reading this to me, congratulated me, and said with emphasis, "I have no fears for you; the day is our own."

The next post brought answers from Fothergill, and what was

certainly of consequence, the reply, in the shape of a trunk, to the demand I had made for my wardrobe, and I began in earnest to prepare myself for by far the most important step hitherto of my life.

And here, ere I proceed to the field of action, it may not be amiss if I give a passing picture of the great person who was to have so much concern in my future fate; nor, in doing so, will I consult any thing but truth.

John Earl of Castleton, at this time about fifty years of age, was of a very high family, and nursed from infancy in the courts both of royalty and the Muses; for he possessed the favour of both. His paternal ancestors were distinguished for abilities, and energy in employing them; his maternal, for a wide spread of noble alliances, and the acknowledged superiority of their elegance and accomplishments, which made them the themes of panegyric with wits and courtiers both at home and abroad.

Lord Castleton's father (perfectly competent to do so) had minutely inspected his education, and initiated him in the politics of the time. His mother, who, from being a celebrated beauty, and the ornament of the court, had become a pattern to her sex for all the virtues of private life, had instilled into him notions of the dignity, as well as the purity, of women, which he always afterwards preserved.

High-mindedness, and contempt of every thing mean, or appertaining to selfishness or cunning, were his own leading characteristics; to which was added by education, and his position in society, a remarkable polish, yet with often a playfulness of manners, though capable of being much ruffled, when, disgusted, as he easily was, by any departure from honour in those with whom he had intercourse, or even any marked solecism in good-breeding or self-respect in any person he encountered.

As to his ambition, we might apply to him what Swift said of Lord Oxford, that he had as much virtue as could possibly consist with a love of power; and his love of power was no greater than what is common to men of his superior capacity.

Long experience of the secret motives of men, different from those which appeared outwardly on the surface, had made him wary, and he did not easily give either his confidence or his favour to what he called men trained to the world, even though young; much rather, as he professed, to those in whom, from being wholly removed from public life, he confided more than in those who were subservient to him from views of their own: (I mean Manners and Fothergill). He would trust and patronise an absolute tyro as to affairs, or even as to the conventional customs of society, provided he had an ingenuous nature and a well-stored mind. Hence he so easily fell in with what these early friends of his were pleased to propose in regard to me.

As he had originally cultivated philosophy and a love of letters,

had he been born in a private or humble station, by his disposition to elegant and liberal studies, he could have made himself sufficiently happy without power. *Vacare litteris* was still a favourite maxim of his, particularly when things went wrong, either through the struggles of rivals, or the efforts of faction, in which case he was often on the *qui vive* to abandon place, and live, as he said, for himself.

He had been some time a widower, and during a pretty long marriage, as a husband, he had never ceased to be a lover. He had been left without children, but his house continued to be what it had been in his married life, the resort of elegant society, both male and female ; and though perhaps the political predominated, he was never more pleased than when it was extended to the eminent in letters, in science, or in wit.

Such was the person to whose protection I was about to be committed by the kindness of my two friends, and under whose auspices I was now to hazard myself in public life.

My introduction to him was rendered easier by the kindness of Mr. Manners, who accompanied me to town for that purpose ; and though when the porter let us into the hall of his magnificent house in Grosvenor-street I felt a little overcome with the power and wealth of the minister, yet, as I felt that I also was a gentleman, and had a heart and a mind, and was conscious of nothing that I had ever done to disgrace them, I walked firmly and erect to the door of the cabinet where Lord Castleton generally passed his mornings.

We were conducted by a messenger in the royal livery, and what struck me was, that we had to go through a long room, where several gentlemen sat enveloped in papers. Among these I presumed I was myself to take my seat.

The room where we were received was handsomely furnished with crimson hangings, and studded all over with cabinet pictures in rich gilt frames, my lord being a great admirer, and, indeed, patron of painting. A glazed door opened into a small but pretty garden of flowering shrubs, over which the eye took in the trees of Hyde Park, certainly not comparable to the beautiful forest I had left, but which, for London, and my notions of it, was an unexpected pleasure.

I had, however, little leisure for this sort of observation, being absorbed by a very different object, in Lord Castleton himself. When we entered he was sitting alone at his desk, and so intent, that at first he did not hear us ; but the messenger announcing Mr. Manners, he immediately rose, and by his cordial reception shewed how much he esteemed that gentleman.

When I was presented, his manner was of course rather more ceremonious, though I should not say it was cold, or even formal. With unaffected grace he shook hands with me, and hoped we

should be better acquainted ; adding, frankly, that I must be a fortunate man to unite the suffrages of such an old stager of the world as his friend Manners, and such a cloistered scholar as my relation Fothergill. To do away, however, any appearance of disparagement which that might imply to the latter, he inquired after him with interest, and even affection, saying there was no man for whose abilities, integrity, and strong natural sense, he had a greater, if so great, an esteem.

All this seemed purposely meant to put me at my ease in rather a trying situation, and it was only a mark of that tact and kindness united, in which no man exceeded, few equalled, this truly noble person.

After this, he fell upon what he, with the same view, called *parish business*.

“ From what I understand,” said he, “ Mr. De Clifford, you will have here very different scenes and occupations from what you have been accustomed to ; but from what I also hear, this will soon sink to nothing before one of your mind. I trust our connection will be as agreeable to you, as I have no doubt it will be to me. You will, however, have no sinecure, as I dare say Mr. Manners will have told you, and I have the pleasure of believing what I certainly did not of any of your predecessors—that you would not like your charge if it were.”

He then told me that my scene of action would be principally at the office in Downing-street, though frequently where I was, as he did a great deal of business at home. “ And if you please,” added he, “ I will shew you your den, where I must always have you at my right hand.”

So saying, he opened a pannel door, which led into a small vestibule, on the other side of which was a closet fitted with desks, in which he said I should be installed the next day.

“ To-day,” said he, “ you would no doubt wish to look about you, especially as a stranger to London. You will, however, I hope, with Mr. Manners, dine with me here at six, till when, I am afraid (and he pulled out his watch), I must bid you farewell.”

It was evident he had an engagement, and we took our leave ; Mr. Manners delighted to find him, as he said, the self-same man he had been for twenty years ; I, absolutely charmed with the mixture of high breeding and natural, cheerful *bonhomie*, which had marked my reception.

Our conversation on this lasted long after we got to our hotel in Hanover-square, and consumed much of the time between that and the hour of dinner.

That dinner was a private one ; not a creature besides ourselves. Even the servants were discarded, and each of us had his own

dumb-waiter by his side ; Lord Castleton having an extra one for the wine, over which he presided, helping us as we wished.

I was a little surprised at a privacy so unexpected, at the house of a nobleman and minister of state ; but as I had already learned a maxim that it was ill breeding to shew surprise at any thing, I kept it to myself. I afterwards discovered from Manners, that there was a reason for it, and that it arose from the desire of Lord Castleton to *study* his new secretary with as little restraint as possible, either upon himself or him. The conversation was therefore easy, turning at first upon the *belles lettres*, in which I was frequently asked for my opinion, which I gave freely, but never offered without being asked. I found afterwards, from Mr. Manners, that this was not unremarked to my advantage by Lord Castleton.

We afterwards fell upon history, English and foreign, in which our host was pleased to say he heard from Fothergill I had made more progress than is usual with an Oxford undergraduate. Without, therefore, alarming me as a catechiser, he adroitly allowed the conversation to lead that way, and seemed well enough pleased with my knowledge of the thirty years' war, the age of Louis XIV., the Revolution, and the public men, as well as wits, of the time of Queen Anne. In this, too, he drew me out by his own acquaintance with them, rather than that I abruptly volunteered what knowledge I had.

Our afternoon was therefore most agreeable, and he assured Manners that he believed he should be more than satisfied with me. All this that good friend told me with pleasure previous to his returning the next day to his beloved Grange.

Thus left to myself, I found it was as much necessity as duty to attach myself entirely to the study of my new patron, and the exact fulfilment of his wishes. Nor was this difficult, for his mind was without tricks ; courts had not spoilt him ; and when he found a character as clear from deceit as himself, he gave it all his protection and all his good-will.

I attended him by appointment the day after our dinner, to take possession of what he always called my den, and he set before me a boxfull of papers of which he desired a *précis* as my morning's task.

"The evenings," said he, "you will have to yourself, and I need not tell you the more you pass them in the best company the better for your improvement, and therefore for your happiness."

Seeing me look embarrassed at this, he good-naturedly asked the reason, and I fairly told him that not only I had no acquaintances in London, but that, from being a mere Oxford recluse, I felt without that confidence which a knowledge of the style of society he mentioned alone could give.

He laughed, and said, from what he could observe, he thought I should do very well.

“ However,” added he, “ we must try to initiate you. I will not affront you by telling you to read Chesterfield ; and perhaps an accomplished female is better for such a purpose than all the male instructors in the world. By the way, I have a large dinner and evening party to-morrow, which you will do well, and which as my aid-de-camp it is a sort of duty in you, to attend. Let us see what that will produce.”

Then, recommending the *précis* to my best care, as it was to be laid before the king, he took his leave for some hours.

The last intimation was rather awful, and I bestowed all my pains on the task, which, however, from the clearness of the papers Lord Castleton had himself drawn, was so little difficult, that on his return he expressed, to my great pleasure, the highest satisfaction in what I had done, and we parted in mutual good humour—not always the case between patron and *protégé*.

CHAPTER VI.

OF A GREAT AND ACCOMPLISHED LADY TO WHOM DE CLIFFORD WAS INTRODUCED,
AND THE BENEFICIAL EFFECTS IT WAS LIKELY TO HAVE IN GIVING HIM A KNOW-
LEDGE OF THE GREAT WORLD

Sweet lady, you have given me life and living.

SHAKSPEARE.—*Merchant of Venice*.

LORD CASTLETON had told me he would not affront me by recommending me to read Chesterfield. That was only with a view to taking my part among fine people. Manners, however, before he left me, recommended me a page of the same authority, with a view to my situation with my patron, and which, he said, I would do well always to remember, bearing in mind the numbers who had failed, for want of doing so, with this very nobleman. The passage was this :—

“ A young man, be his merit what it will, can never raise himself, but must, like the ivy round the oak, twine himself round some man of great power and interest. You must belong to a minister some time before anybody can belong to you ; and an inviolable fidelity to that minister, even in his disgrace, will be meritorious, and recommend you to the next. *Ministers love a personal, much more than a party attachment.*”

I thought this excellent information, coming from such an experienced party man himself. I resolved to profit by it, and, from what I had seen, I was pleased to think that Lord Castleton was a man to command one's *personal* attachment, exclusive of all the attractions created by his power.

Pondering these things, I employed the time previous to the great dinner to which the earl had bidden me, in making little arrangements for my future comforts. I was still a *demy* of Maudlin, and resolved to keep it, as Prior did his fellowship, to give him "a crust and a clean shirt," after he and his party had been shipwrecked in the world. Meantime, my salary from Lord Castleton was 500*l.* a-year, with which I took a pretty lodging in Greenstreet, to be always near my patron, and went to some expense in my wardrobe, to make the figure called for by my new position.

The party at Lord Castleton's was one of those grand ones, as they were called, which as a minister he was occasionally expected to give; I was rather anxious, therefore, as to its effect upon my appearance and manners, and how to acquit myself in a scene so entirely new to me. The family at Foljambe had been the only one of any great fashion with which I had been acquainted, and the retired habits of their dignity had prevented the display of it so as to occasion me any very particular fears of a failure on my part. In my last visit, too, God knows their afflictions made them little able to dazzle any one by an exhibition of what may be termed high manners.

Here, however, I was called upon to make my first appearance, as it were, upon a theatre royal—I, who had never figured except upon country boards, and little even of that. I had, nevertheless, something within me that told me I should not fail. The self-respect which had not abandoned me at Oxford, where every thing was new, would, I thought, bear me through this trial, not severer in proportion than that I had undergone.

Exclusive of this, the man I had the most, and indeed only cause to fear, had seemed, by his consideration and urbanity, to put all fear to sleep; and as for others, why should I fear them? They were but human, like myself, and if they were ill-bred enough to despise me for not knowing forms I had never been taught, I felt I could despise them with more justice in my turn, for not having common sense any more than common good nature.

As it was, therefore, I felt bold, and even promised my inquiring disposition some pleasant food in examining the new habits and manners to which I expected to be introduced. I was even impatient for the dinner hour, and could not be persuaded, by a sort of *valet de place* whom I had hired, that if I waited half an hour after the time appointed, I should yet find none of the company assembled.

I was in Grosvenor Street exactly as the clock struck six—a dinner hour fashionably late in those days—and found that my valet knew these things, at least, better than myself; for not a creature was in the drawing-room, not even Lord Castleton, whom I at least expected to see prepared to receive his guests. So far

from it, the company was more than half assembled before he made his appearance. As they, however, all knew one another, nobody felt any awkwardness but myself.

Both ladies and gentlemen, as they dropt in, levelled their eye-glasses at me, but instantly lowered them on finding that they did not know me, treating me as if I were one of the tables or chairs. Natural benignity told me this was wrong, and I thought not better of these persons of the highest English *monde* for this sample of their breeding.

While reflecting upon this, as if to relieve me, Granville, whom I had not seen for twelve months, and thought still on the continent, was announced. He knew everybody in the room; and seeing him accost me with his usual friendliness, all the glasses were again pointed at me for a minute, and again lowered, as if, curiosity being satisfied, I had a right to no more.

At length, my lord himself entered, and by presenting me to several of his guests, gave me a sort of passport to all, and relieved me from the embarrassment of feeling alone in a crowd. What struck me was, that he seemed under no sort of consciousness from having allowed his company to be so long assembled without him; nor did they in the smallest degree appear to think that, being a minister, it was out of the common course of things. I had now been introduced to several lords and gentlemen, and several ladies and gentlewomen, but the inveterate immovability of the English character displayed itself even in this miserable quarter of an hour before dinner; for, as to that repast, nobody seemed to recollect for what purpose he or she was invited; an equanimity which rather surprised me. There was an evident pause for something, which I could not expound.

At length it was explained by the arrival of a lady, seemingly of superior order, and really worth waiting for—a being of no ordinary quality or pretensions, in whom the very first glance of the eye and the first vibration of the ear discovered a marked difference and superiority as to dress, manners, and general *ton de société*, which threw all others into shade. Though not absolutely young, she was eminently beautiful, or rather handsome, and her form and manner of that peculiar cast to set off impressively the richness of her attire, in which her diamonds seemed only a natural part of herself.

Had this lady been merely outwardly beautiful, I might have been tempted to have exclaimed with Prior—

“ O! what perfections must that person share;
Who fairest is esteem’d where all are fair!”

But her beauty was the least of her attractions, for her first bloom was past. Yet though, perhaps, thirty years of age, there was a

set of features which spoke such nobleness, combined with such frankness, such modest intelligence, and at the same time such self-possession, the effect of constant intercourse with, or rather of presiding in, good company, that you would have been sorry to have exchanged the woman for the girl : for she had all the sparkle of a girl's first impression, with all the ease of deportment which none but a woman can display.

As I was lately from Oxford, and not very long from school, perhaps a little mythological pedantry may be forgiven me, though now a minister's secretary, when I thought I saw in this superior lady the majesty of Juno, the grace of Venus, and the sense of Minerva¹.

It is the observation, I think, of Chesterfield, that in every company or society there is always some one person who takes a lead—one who by a sort of tacit consent is distinguished from the rest, and whom, *par excellence*, all are disposed to consider and obey as the lord or lady of the ascendant for the time being. Such certainly was this eminent person.

She seemed to know everybody in the room, and be perfectly at her ease with them; was particularly so with Lord Castleton, who I found was her uncle, and gracious with Granville, who was most profound in his attention to her. This she appeared to receive with good-will, but as if it was entirely her due; and while I was wondering with myself who this queen could be—so surrounded by subjects—judge my surprise, when Lord Castleton advancing, presented me to her as his niece, Lady Hungerford.

From the mere glimpse I had had of her in Binfield churchyard, muffled in her walking disguise, no wonder if I could not recollect her; but now the truth rushed upon me, and association made her of ten times more consequence even than she was from herself alone. Could I indeed forget that interesting bust, in that too interesting surreptitious visit to the summer-house at Foljambe Park?

Yet she wanted not this association to create in me the most pure admiration, which indeed I only shared in common with all others who knew her. To account for this, let me indulge my readers and myself with a more detailed memorial of her.

Nobly allied, and the widow of a viscount, of great personal influence; with moreover a large jointure, which gave her great command of the *matériel* for display in the fashionable world : had she no further pretensions than these, she must have taken a high society. But she had others of a still higher character.

Still what may be thought young; very handsome, though of maturer beauty; very elegant, very accomplished, and with no small portion of talent (particularly for observing all that was passing

¹ In my old age I am tempted to suppress this observation, as pedantic schoolboy nonsense; but as I was scarcely at years of discretion when I made it, I let it stand.

around her), she felt herself a great centre of attraction in various circles, whether of the idle or busy, the literary or political, the elegant or rational.

What was a great aid to this, she was of a frank and friendly nature, and would rather do good than ill; and though with wit, sufficient to make folly ridiculous where it intruded, yet never seeking, unless he deserved it, to make any person uncomfortable.

Hence, she was really courted for more than her mere fashion, and while all admired the peculiar ease and fascination of her manner, they gave her still more credit for her talents and sense. Young men were particularly fond of cultivating her acquaintance, and she in return was pleased (as indeed no one had better means) to bring young men forward in good society.

Lord Castleton, I afterwards found, was very proud of her, often calling her "that superior woman, my niece."

Of such a person, who would suppose that the decayed gentleman, the Yorkshire farmer's son, could ever obtain the commonest notice, especially on a first introduction? But so it was, and by means which perhaps may seem still more surprising;—to explain which, let us proceed by steps.

In times long gone by, now talked of as we talk of romance—York and Lancaster to wit—the Lord Hungerford, decapitated as a Lancastrian by Edward IV., left a daughter, Mary, who being restored in blood by Henry VII., carried her grandfather's title of Hungerford, together with his estates, into the family of Hastings, by her marriage with George, first Earl of Huntingdon.

The connection thus produced between the two families was never forgotten among its most remote branches to the latest time; so that the late viscount, and of course his accomplished wife, were perfectly well known to the family of Foljambe Park.

This was marked by an annual visit while the viscount was alive, and still more by having produced a warm and mutual affection between Bertha and Lady Hungerford, begun in the childhood of the former, who still continued to call her by the endearing title of *chère maman*.

Lady Hungerford had only been a fortnight from the Park, where she had passed three days with its inmates, when it was thus my fortune to be introduced to her notice by Lord Castleton. Judge my feelings, when, with the grace and frankness that belonged to her, far away from that haughty air of protection which many in the same situation would have exhibited, she said,

"I know more of Mr. De Clifford than perhaps he thinks, for I have lately seen his friends, Mr. and Miss Hastings, who talked of him with much esteem."

I own this flushed my cheek, and I could only answer they were too good.

“Nay,” said Lady Hungerford, “that is but a cold reception of their recollection, especially as they accompanied it with many kind particulars; which, however, I shall not tell you, for fear the philosophy which they say belongs to you should be put to the test.”

She said this archly, and with a smile, and Granville, who was watching us, and saw it, whispered me, after she was separated from us by other company—“The smile of that lady is worth a million.”

What this meant I did not know, but from the account I have given of Lady Hungerford, the result of after-acquaintance, it will be easily understood.

In fact, it was my great good fortune to find favour with this elegant lady; for, some days afterwards, Lord Castleton told me he had been speaking to her about me, “when,” said he, “she observed that at our dinner party she liked your manner, which was quiet, yet collected; modest, yet with no *mauvaise honte*; that you seemed a youth of promise; and that as to your present unacquaintance with *les usages*, which I told her gave you serious alarm, that would soon mend with observation, and, as she was pleased to say, *my* tutorage; to which I could not help replying, that her own instruction would be far more efficacious.”

At this, Lord Castleton said, she smiled, and observed that Granville, since our dinner party, had told her so much about me, that she was almost inclined to undertake it.

“I tell you all this,” said Lord Castleton, “to give you the encouragement you say you want, to put you more at your ease in the circles in which you are to move, and to which you have been hitherto a stranger—a fault which, as Lady Hungerford says, will very soon mend, particularly if she should really choose to patronize you, as she has done by more than one young man. For, give me leave to tell you,” added he, “that no female in England or France has it more in her power to bring forward ‘youths unknown to fame,’ to a respectable, and even a distinguished place in society, if they are fit for it.”

Lord Castleton concluded with telling me that I had been also much obliged to the Hastings family for their mention of me to his niece, and advised me to present myself to her that very morning.

“She will, I dare say, see you,” said he; “and if she does, though very penetrating in observation, do not be afraid of her, and above all, do not act, nor affect either to set off your acquirements, or veil what you may think your deficiencies. Be what you are, natural and unaffected; you will find your account in it.”

I thanked Lord Castleton quite as much for this as for any of his other favours, for I was really much impressed with Lady Hungerford, and gladly obeyed his suggestion to call upon her that morning. I went, therefore, immediately to Berkeley Square, was let in, and found her in her *boudoir*, so occupied with a book, that at first

she did not hear me announced. The book I saw, on her putting it down, was Shakspeare, and the play *Cymbeline*.

The *boudoir* breathed nothing but elegance, and from an abundant supply of beautiful flowers, all the freshness of spring. She seemed herself a magnificent rose. Marbles, alabasters, mirrors, pendules, and well-bound books, surrounded her; every thing was *recherché*.

But it was her dress—though only a morning one, so inimitably put on, and so gracefully adapted to the airiness of her shape, and the unaffected, I had almost said, the careless grace of her movements—that most fixed me. This dress, or rather the grace with which it was worn, were I to try a hundred years, I never could describe. Luckily, it has been done inimitably already, by one who must have drawn it from the Lady Hungerford of his time, aided by the charm of his own imagination:—

“ Give me a look, give me a face,
That makes simplicity a grace;
Robes loosely flowing, hair as free;—
Such sweet neglect more taketh me,
Than all the adulteries of art,
That strike mine eye but not my heart.”

In this apparently sweet neglect, but real propriety of dress, Lady Hungerford seemed an enchantress in her faery palace. How different from any thing I had ever seen in the common-place life I had led, confined, with the one exception of Foljambe Park, to Oxford, or my own homely home. To be sure, Foljambe Park was rich and imposing, and Bertha herself a sweet daughter of elegance; but her's was the elegance of nature alone; Lady Hungerford's, of nature united with just so much art as could supply ornament where it might be wanted, and no more.

She received me with that genuine politeness, equally removed from ceremony and familiarity, which, from putting you at your ease, has been called artificial good-nature, but here the good-nature seemed innate.

“ I am obliged to you, Mr. De Clifford,” said she, “ for this visit, for, exclusive of Lord Castleton being so interested about you, you are the friend of those dear friends of mine, the Hastings, and also of another old friend, Mr. Granville, for whom I have great respect; nay, I also have had the honour of knowing, and being in my girlhood very much afraid of, that ‘ potent, grave, and reverend signor,’ Mr. Fothergill, when he was the inmate of Lord Castleton, and who, I believe, was your tutor. Thus, then, you must think yourself any thing but an absolute stranger.”

This seemed charmingly frank, and I returned my acknowledgments as well as I could, and said something about condescension, when she stopt me short, and said with animation,

“Condescension is a word which I neither like nor admit, except on high days and holydays, or at court, where every thing is sophisticated. Now, I have been told that *you* are any thing but sophisticated—that Nature is your goddess—and that, at present at least, you are not able to call either persons or things but by their right names. I own this to me is a phenomenon which I seldom see, though it pleases me when I do. But as I have been told, too, that you are very proud, I am sure you would wish to discard condescension from your vocabulary; so we will have no more of it.”

All this while I was standing, and she went on therefore :

“Now sit down and talk to me, not as a fine lady, as perhaps I have been represented to you, but as one who loves ingenuousness wherever it can be found; so be as ingenuous as you please. To be so myself, however, I must tell you (here she looked at her pendule) that I have just one quarter of an hour, and no more, to give you, for I have an appointment at three with a very great lady who waits for nobody, and which, therefore, I must attend.”

Who would not be encouraged by such a speech, and such demeanour? and yet the very frankness of it abashed me; for it seemed to interdict all common-place matters, and I knew not enough of her, or perhaps was too desirous to say something agreeable, to know where to begin.

She saw this, and was probably amused, for she said, in a rallying tone,

“Come; why don’t you take me at my word, for I know you can? You would not be so silent if you were either at Foljambe Park, or with your friend Mr. Granville.”

At this I felt myself reddening uncomfortably, and stammered out,

“Though your ladyship will not permit the word condescension, I may at least say you are very good, which I am sure I feel you to be.”

“I know not what you call good,” replied she; “but I have no scruple to say that Lord Castleton’s and Mr. Granville’s account of you, to say nothing of Mr. Hastings (O! how I waited to hear his daughter joined with him, but in vain), has given me an interest about you. I hear you are very romantic, though very natural; very proud, though very humble; in short, a contradiction, and I love contradictions, at least if no more than what I was wrapt up in when you were announced, in an author who I am also told you revere as a demi-god, and can say him by heart.”

At this she took up the play she was busy with on my arrival, and pointed out the passage that then had so much engaged her——

“O! thou goddess,
Thou divine Nature, how thyself thou blazon’st

In these two princely boys! They are as gentle
 As zephyr blowing below the violet,
 Not wagging his sweet head : and yet as rough,
 Their royal blood encha'd, as the rudest wind,
 That by the top doth take the mountain pine,
 And makes him stoop to the vale."

She read this with precision and feeling, adding, "but I must give you a various reading upon this, proposed by Mr. Granville (for it was he who applied this passage to you), and said that for 'royal blood,' we must read 'De Clifford blood.' Is it so?"

Though all this was very personal, I cannot say but I was charmed. I was pleased with the mere thought that I was of sufficient consequence for her to be occupied about me, and still more with her manner of letting me know it. I saw in her a woman of the very first breeding in the country; full of the most agreeable qualities, and, withal, the intimate friend of a person I had adored but despaired of; and yet condescending (for I must use the word) to be pleased in making a comparatively humble creature pleased with himself.

Her confidence excited mine; I threw off my constraint, and my mind gave itself up to the pleasure which a participation of congenial sentiments, when inequality is forgotten, never fails to produce.

This congeniality was here called forth by the play from which she had quoted the lines which she said Granville had applied to me; and, once upon *Cymbeline*, we soon fell upon other passages, and I had the happiness of finding that all I said of the beautiful character of Imogen met her own feelings in every point; and when the pendule struck three, she seemed sorry, saying, with peculiar grace, she was not surprised at all that Granville and Miss Hastings had said of me.

She, however, told me that Lord Castleton had informed her of all the tormenting difficulties in which I felt plunged, from being a stranger to the new world I was in—its manners and maxims—and, above all, as to the mysteries of what is called fashionable life. To be instructed in this, she told me with a smile, that Lord Castleton had asked leave to send me to her school, which, from the specimen of the scholar, she said she was very willing to allow.

"So, as you now know the school-room," added she, "I shall hope to see you again. Besides, I may be a scholar as well as you; for while I teach you the *beau monde*, you may teach me Shakespeare; and now adieu, for I see I am summoned. There is not time even for a take-leave compliment."

The meaning of this was, that one of the royal coaches was at the door to take her to the palace, where she was in high favour,

as well as place; and I proceeded to my little lodging in Green Street, with the sort of confused pleasantness which a man feels when he wakes from a busy and crowded, but very delightful dream.

CHAPTER VII.

CONTAINING A VERY LEARNED DISSERTATION UPON FASHION, IN WHICH A LADY OF THE FIRST FASHION DISTINGUISHES HERSELF.

The plague of such antick, lisping, affecting fantasticoes. Why, is not this a lamentable thing, grandsire, that we should be thus afflicted with these strange flies, these fashion-mongers, who stand so much on the new form, that they cannot sit at ease on the old bench?

SHAKSPEARE.—*Romeo and Juliet.*

I TRUST that the picture of the delightful lady whom I attempted to set before my readers in the last chapter, has created the interest for her which she deserves.

Lord Castleton was pleased with my description of the intercourse I had with her, and still more with the account she gave of it herself.

“You cannot,” said he, “cultivate her too much—that is, if Granville will permit you.”

These words surprised me, for I thought more was meant than met the ear. It had occurred to me, as indeed may be remembered, that the only cause of Granville’s power to resist Bertha was his heart being already occupied; and it now struck me from what I had seen and heard, that Lady Hungerford was the amulet that protected him. She was certainly the magnet that drew and kept him so long at Paris. *She* was the reason, *best known to himself*, which enabled him to see, speak to, serve, and admire Bertha without loving her. In short, Lady Hungerford, I supposed, was the Sacharissa who had rendered Bertha no more than an Amorel.

Well; I gave him joy. I was sincerely glad; for, from what I could observe, his Sacharissa was disposed to be more kind than Waller’s. And yet——

Ah! if it were not for those *and yet*s, how many hearts would be spared anxiety! how unfounded would be the complaint, that “the course of true love never did run smooth.”

Yes; there was a strong “and yet” against poor Granville. For, with all his high connections, talents, reputation, admittance, he was but a younger brother, with a younger brother’s fortune. Yet——(for there was a yet on the other side) five thousand a year jointure, and love! *if* there was love!

From all this it will appear that I was reasoning upon my own case; for in truth I now discovered, if my suspicion was right, that Granville's case was very little different from mine; in which I only forgot the little circumstances that my father was a farmer, his a courtier and a man of fortune; his mistress at least fond of his company; while mine had allowed me to depart from her for ever.

But let me return to my narrative.

From my admiration of Lady Hungerford, as well as the encouragement she gave me, it may be supposed that I again presented myself at her door, and I was again admitted into that temple of elegance—the *boudoir* where she passed her mornings.

She was gracious as ever, and asked me how I got on in the *science* of fashion, for science she termed it.

“I believe,” said she, “there is no taking a degree in it at Oxford, nor even any professors of it to have recourse to on an emergency?”

“That I can answer for to my certain knowledge,” replied I.

“After all, then,” continued she, “I believe what I have heard, that London, as it is the largest, is also the best university. We have indeed many professors of this science here, though with very different qualifications.”

“It is this difference,” answered I, “in those who profess to have the same knowledge and the same reputation in the science, which puzzles me; and this it is, upon which, under your ladyship's auspices, I so wish to be enlightened. I see a number of human beings divided into different circles, and by no means shewing the same character or manners; not even of the same rank or condition, fortune or talents; and yet all calling themselves, or claiming to be called, the fashionable world. Are they all entitled to this privilege, or only a few? and if not all, how are we to distinguish the genuine and original from the counterfeit and the copyists?”

“You have advanced pretty far,” said Lady Hungerford, “in having already found out that there is this distinction. It is by no means every one that has that tact.”

“It is important, however,” said I, “because, having no pretension myself, but seeking a proper model for imitation, I may be misled by false colours, and instead of being well-bred, may turn out to be ridiculous.”

“Nothing more true,” said Lady Hungerford, “if you were without the tact I have mentioned, and which I believe you to possess—the tact to discover the real *tournure* from the false. For *tournure*, after all, is perhaps the appropriate word, far more definite in its signification than fashion itself, so generally used, and become so common, that it is now almost confounded with its opposite—vulgarity.”

I thanked her for this new light as to terms, and hoped it would

lead to farther acquisitions in what she had so properly called the science.

I was thus proceeding with apologies, when she stopt me, as she had once before.

“No apologies, if you please; I have told Lord Castleton that I would take you as a pupil, and I will even produce you when you feel bold enough to wish it. In short, exclusive of Lord Castleton’s interest about you, there is something in you that pleases me; and as he has commended you to my instructions, in order to obtain the only thing you say you want, this *tournure*, this *ton de la parfaitement bonne compagnie*, I have given you leave to cultivate me, and you shall study my acquaintance, which will, perhaps, enlighten and initiate you into what you, who are a philosopher, will no doubt call the *philosophy* of fashion, better than all direct lectures or your own speculations.”

I thanked her, as became me, and said, with a low bow, that in such a school, and with such a sincere admiration for my preceptress, I was not without hopes that I should succeed.

“Very good,” said she, “your bow and your gratitude are particularly graceful, and in a *tête à tête*, such as this, I will not blame you for a few compliments to my *ladyship’s* abilities; but if your wish be to acquire the real *tournure* we talk of, and which alone can be denominated real *fashion*, I must caution you to be as sparing as possible of direct compliments, and particularly the repetition, or, if possible, the mention of the hackneyed title of ladyship. It would defeat your pretensions in a moment.”

I thought this odd. “What,” said I, “may I not express the approbation, or admiration, or shew the respect I feel, if I am sincere?”

“Nothing so dangerous,” replied she. “If ever you shew the least dependence upon another for any thing which such compliments imply, you are gone. And as for the perpetual recourse to one’s title, far from evincing the politeness aimed at, it will rank you with menials. No one will look upon you except as an object of compassion, and you will be far, very far, from that admission of perfect equality, for which all persons of true fashion give one another credit. You may be guilty indeed of a little flattery now and then, but it must be well wrapt up, and rather by innuendo than staringly obvious.”

Here she laughed at her own learned mode of treating the subject; which, however, she said was important enough to justify it; to which I agreed, and promised never to let approbation, or respect, for any body, or any thing, again dishonour my pretensions. But as to ever understanding the arcana of what did or did not constitute fashion, I owned I despaired.

“At Oxford, in your cloister, and among pedants who know

nothing of courts, but their quadrangles, I could believe this," said Lady Hungerford. "But here, in the very midst of *nous autres*, as we are called——"

"Ah! those happy '*nous autres*,'" I cried. "Though I see and feel all their superiority, I know not what precise qualification it is that gives them their claims to that mysterious appellation. For I see people possessing it as a title of the first consequence, who are yet of not much consequence themselves, nay, some of them of no consequence at all, but really in downright poverty; while others, rolling in riches, toil often in quest of it in vain. Now, I should have thought that riches, at least, which command every thing else, might command this also."

"Riches," replied Lady Hungerford, rather contemptuously, "are the last things which can confer it upon any one not fitted for it. It cannot be bought with money, and you might as well suppose a Dutch skipper, refined, as Congreve says, from a whale fishery, could have sculptured the Venus de Medicis, as that a man on account of his wealth could pass muster as a man of fashion."

"But riches would surely go a good way towards it," observed I.

"Of themselves, not a step," said she; "nay, in many instances they would be much in the way, by enabling people to make themselves ridiculous, which persons of fashion never are. I allow, however, they are sometimes very *convenient*, so as occasionally to make their possessors *tolerated*, but no more, and only on particular occasions."

"Well, but," said I, "it was but yesterday that I dined with Mr. Grogram, the great scrivener, who asked me, because I was Lord Castleton's secretary, to meet Lord Rufus Urban. Lord Rufus has this *tournure*, I suppose?"

"Nobody more of it; scarcely any one so much. But what then?"

"Why, Mr. Grogram is the most vulgar of mankind—vulgar in mind, in person, in manners, conversation, and dress; and yet Lord Rufus seemed quite at home with him; nay, enjoyed his dinner, pronounced the claret excellent, and in the evening played several rubbers at whist; though, even to me, Mr. Grogram and all his company were of the very coarsest tone."

Lady Hungerford smiled, and said—"You will soon find this out. As high men in rank and breeding as Lord Rufus, will sometimes, nay, not unfrequently, lay aside their refinement for the sake of a very good dinner, which I suppose Mr. Grogram gave."

"The best possible," said I, "as to cookery; indeed the cooks and most of the *matériel* were from Paris."

"Just so; and as to the whist, pray did Mr. Grogram win or lose?"

"O! lost considerably, and well he might, for he cannot play at all—nay, even revoked."

“Perhaps on purpose,” said Lady Hungerford. “All *dans les règles*. But these are mysteries which cannot yet be explained to you; you will know them in time. Meanwhile should Mr. Grogram attempt to get into White’s, his low birth, and lower manners, would for ever defeat such an attempt, and, notwithstanding their seeming intimacy, Lord Rufus would be the first to blackball him.”

“What an advantage then is birth,” said I, thinking I had now discovered one at least of the ingredients of fashion.

“Be not misled by that supposition,” replied my instructress; “recollect Pope:—

“What will ennoble sots, or slaves, or cowards?”

Alas! not all the blood of all the Howards.’

“So it is with real fashion. All the birth in the world will not necessarily give that cool self-possession, that air of internal superiority to all awkward feelings, or what Chesterfield calls that *intrepidity* of assurance, which genuine fashion confers. Why the Duchess of———herself, though full of humble piety, and an angel in goodness, handsome withal, as well as among the highest of the high born, is not considered as *ton*.”

Beat out of this, I tried talents and genius, and mentioned one or two persons eminent in literature, and the arts, whom I had already seen in fashionable parties, both at dinners and assemblies.

Lady Hungerford would not admit even this as a passport.

“Men of genius certainly, and very respectable people,” said she; “and if their object is to be enrolled in the legitimate ranks of real high life, deserving a better fate; for they are, for the most part, mere lions, who have their day, and, unless for something more than their literature, will be soon forgotten in their persons, though their works may survive. With this class of persons a single piece of awkwardness, an exhibition of *mauvaise honte* (to which most of them, from want of breeding, are liable); even an ill-cut coat; in short, the least vulgarity impedes their advance, if it do not absolutely annihilate them.”

I now felt repulsed right and left, and asked if personal beauty, manners, grace, and accomplishments, would not avail?

“Manners,” said Lady Hungerford, “will undoubtedly do much, combined with other requisites; but even they, not of themselves alone. The manners of a man utterly of no consequence, will be of themselves worse than of no consequence, for they may seem to claim a distinction not legitimate. Beauty may create admiration with the men, and envy with the women, but will not confer the privileges of *noblesse* we speak of. Miss Pidcock was beautiful as a Houri, and as such was intended to acquire fashion herself, and bestow it upon her sisters. But her name was against her; she was produced by a vulgar aunt; Lord Petronius, the *arbiter elegan-*

tiarum for the time being, pronounced her a milk-maid, and there was an end of her."

"Perhaps," said I, "she was not graceful, and I own all the beauty in the world, without grace, could never win me."

"*Winning*," replied my shrewd patroness, good-naturedly laughing, "is not the question, but whether grace, even the most exquisite, will *alone* raise a person into fashion who has no other pretension to it. Not only it will not (for how many very graceful persons do we not see neglected though looked at), and, on the other hand, how many personifications of clumsiness (large limbs, high shoulders, and enormous *embonpoint*), do we not behold in our best drawing-rooms? What exhibitions are there also of scraggy, flat, ill-formed machines, inrolled in, and constituting what is called, the very best company! These you will meet not only in the *crème*, but in the *crème de la crème*, as it has been called, of high society."

"Good heavens!" cried I, astonished at these difficulties, "if all these qualifications fail, what will succeed?"

"Nothing," answered the lady, "but, in addition to the qualifications we have been canvassing, that indescribable something which we know not what to call, though we daily and hourly see, and fall down before, and worship it the moment it appears, and yet can never exactly say why. Perhaps Hannah More characterized it, when she wrote the line,

'All Levison's sweetness, and all Beaufort's grace.'

But even this grace and sweetness must be coupled with Levison and Beaufort's rank, blood, and connexions, before it can succeed. Perhaps it is a gift from nature, that rich gift to the Seymours, the Somersets, the Fitzroys, or the Gowers, which a nabob, and a nabob's wife, would give half India to be able to acquire. But still we know not in language to describe it, and hence, I said, it was indescribable."

"Surely," said I, struck with this ebullition, "if you can so well exemplify this something, so powerful as well as desirable, though it have no name, it cannot be so indescribable as you have called it. One who understands so well what it is *not*, must know what it *is*, and therefore can tell at least of what it is composed."

"No!" answered the lady again; "for its ingredients are as heterogeneous as numerous; by no means producing the same effect upon all persons, nor always upon the same person. They cannot, therefore, be classed, or depended upon. They may be efficient in one, inefficient in another; attract here, repel there; conciliate, or affront; be admired, or hated;—according as a combination of fortunate or untoward events may prevail among different parties.

"One reason for this may be, that good breeding may be of two

sorts—one original, the other imitative. Hence the manners of the old nobility are rarely caught by new men, from the consciousness of superiority in the former, and of inferiority in the latter, imbibed from their cradles. Much depends also upon convention, a knowledge of which, and strict observance of its laws, are absolutely necessary.”

“Would that I could obtain this knowledge,” said I.

“What you may do when you have been some time at Court, I know not,” returned Lady Hungerford. “At present you have too much simplicity, and are too *natural*, to take a degree in fashion. If you saw a beautiful woman, you would stare at her; if she was your mistress, you would shew pleasure; if the house was on fire, you would shew fear.”

“And good cause too,” said I.

“Aye; there it is,” observed my preceptress, “I said you were too natural. I am afraid you will never do, and I shall report you to Lord Castleton accordingly.”

Thus disported this lively lady on a subject which had often puzzled me, and wiser heads than mine, but which she seemed to have considered as philosophically as playfully.

The conference was now about to end; but of a sudden it occurred to me that we had not touched upon a very important part of the subject, and that it was quite as necessary for one studying *les usages* to know the legitimate meaning of the opposite to fashion, as of fashion itself.

I propounded this, and asked, though we might not be able exactly to tell in what fashion consisted, whether it might not assist the inquiry to define its opposite—vulgarity.

“Scientifically put,” said she. “I find you have not been at Oxford for nothing. In truth, the question is most apposite to that we have been treating; certainly, much connected with it; and it seems to me that it is not quite so difficult; for though we cannot easily manage to say more than what fashion is *not*, we can pretty well tell what vulgarity *is*.”

“This is what I most devoutly wish to understand,” said I, “though you will pardon me if I venture to doubt your powers of instruction here, from the impossibility of *your* knowing any thing of such a subject.”

“A very well-intended compliment,” observed the lady; “I see you have already endeavoured to profit by one of my precepts, and, as I told you to do, have tried at least to wrap it well up. After all, perhaps, I may have hopes of you. And yet you are still most unlearned in the matter; for don’t you see that *nous autres* are not merely the best, but the exclusive judges of what does *not* belong to us, by being the sole arbiters of what *does*. Ask a vulgar (the very vulgarest man), what is vulgarity—he will take care to tell

you it cannot be himself. Those only can know it—or, at least, those know it best—who are farthest removed from it;—so that after all, what you intended is the reverse of a compliment. I feel for your mistake.”

What *she* really felt I don't exactly know, but, for myself, I felt this was a palpable hit, and in some confusion owned it.

“Well,” said she, “you will do better next time; only take notice that this is another proof of the danger of attempting compliments. And now for our subject, upon which, however, as we have settled that we can tell what vulgarity *is*, we shall not have so much trouble in determining what it is not. But, may I ask what *you* say it *is*? That is, who are, in your opinion, the vulgar?”

“To answer generally,” said I, “I suppose the lower orders; the common people, called *vulgus*, whence the word; and hence what the common people generally are, the uneducated—the *gens de la halle*—the mob.”

“In my view of the question,” answered Lady Hungerford, “this definition will not do; though, as a generic explanation, it is, I suppose, accurate. But although if *vulgus* (which I know is translated by you scholars, common people) stands for *vulgar*, vulgar and the common people must be the same; still it will not, *as I feel it*, mean those hateful persons who really form the vulgar; for, in my sense of vulgarity, it is always taken with an adverse meaning; and in that bad sense the common people are not identified with it, for they are neither exclusively nor necessarily disgusting.”

“But being, as you allow, *the vulgar*, is not that a paradox?” asked I.

“You think so, I see; and I will therefore endeavour to explain myself; for I am clear that to be one of the common people does not *necessarily* carry along with it that *offensiveness* which always so shocks us, and which is by no means confined to the lower orders, *merely as such*; neither, *as such*, does it *necessarily* belong to them, though generically (and only generically) the name implies it.”

“I see your ladyship,” said I, “is determined to treat this deep subject as it deserves, most philosophically and most profoundly. I assure you I am quite alive to the ingenuity of this distinction.”

“All that I mean,” continued the lady, “is that we are not shocked with what only appears in its *natural* colours, and pursues its *natural* course, remaining always in its *appropriate place*. It is when, without necessity, it leaves its proper place from choice, and forces itself where it ought not to be, that it becomes disgusting. Of this the fable of the ass who (respectable in his stable, but jealous of the lap-dog) forced his way into the drawing-room, and was punished for it, is an apt illustration. So we hate not a

scavenger's or a market-woman's manners, while in their necessary occupations, but if we copied them in our saloons, who could fail to be shocked?"

"Nothing can be more correct," said I, admiring her precision, and anxious to see how she would work out her inference.

"Well then," she observed, "the mere phrase, 'the vulgar'—meaning, in its general signification, only the most *numerous* part of the community—does not, of *necessity*, imply the same thing as the *relative* term vulgarity, which always means something revolting."

"Charmingly logical," I exclaimed, "and yet, I fear, the manners of the lower orders have always in them something revolting."

"I have not found it so," replied she, mildly; "provided they do not seek to make themselves higher than they are; then, indeed, they become offensive, ridiculous, and disgusting, like Monsieur l'ane in the fable I have just now quoted. When they do not do this, but are content with their stations, they are too respectable to excite any notion derogatory to that *equality* with us in the eye of our common Creator, which the most spoilt child of dignity and fashion, who ventures to think of what he is made of, must feel as well as themselves."

I cannot say how I honoured my delightful preceptress for this unaffected display of her just, as well as refined mind, especially when she went on—

"From their greater numbers, it is true, the common people, being the poor classes, the chief of their time must be taken up in endeavouring to live. They cannot have the same facilities for education or polish that belong to the rich. But on that very account, the want of them cannot be attributed to them as a crime, or even a fault. We allow for the necessity of the case; we expect what we find; and we do not feel disappointed or disgusted when we find it. Who is shocked to see a beggar ill-clothed; or even a chimney-sweeper begrimed with soot; or the manners of servants while in the servants' hall? But if masters, *having the power of choice*, prefer dirt to cleanliness, or ape their servants' manners, then indeed we sicken, and avoid them as *vulgar*, in the hateful sense of the term."

"Perfectly clear," said I, delighted to see such an apologist for the many in such an ornament of the few.

"It follows, then," continued she, "that what you denominate vulgar, is not what I mean when I say I hate vulgarity."

"I am quite convinced," observed I; "though I would beg the favour, that what you have said about *choice* might be a little more explained."

"What I mean," said Lady Hungerford, "is when a person has a power to prefer one set of habits to another, and is not confined by his lot to the particular set he has chosen, yet chooses (as many

do) to degrade himself by adopting the manners, and sometimes even the appearance, of those below him. To be dirty, whether in person or mind, is vulgar ; but only if you have a choice in it, that is, if you have the power to be otherwise if you please, and refuse to be so. If forced to it from poverty, and not inclined to it from disposition, I should say you were only to be pitied, not that you were vulgar. If a duke had the taste to dress, and live, and haunt pot-houses, like a hackney-coachman, I should say he was vulgar ; not so the hackney-coachman himself."

"Clear as day," exclaimed I, and again I could not help admiring the sense and tact of this engaging as well as superior woman.

"The result is," continued she, "that vulgarity is what I have called it, a *relative* not an *abstract* term. It by no means belongs exclusively to the lower orders, or even to particular classes, except by comparison. It is rather the characteristic of individuals, and as such may belong to the high as well as the low ; and hence the well-known phrase of 'the great vulgar ;' as on the other hand we often think particular persons not eminent for their condition, or who have had little instruction, to be *naturally* well-bred."

Here Lady Hungerford ceased ; and though I felt all the force and clearness of these observations, I was so unwilling to lose the charm of her voice and manner in recommending them, that I would not abandon the argument ; but while I allowed the accuracy of this account of vulgarity, asked what we were to say to the disdain with which a duchess will sometimes treat the wife of a merchant, however rich, or a lawyer, however learned, or a divine, even though a bishop?

"Are you quite sure you are just to the duchess in this?" returned the lady. "No duchess if really well-bred (which we are to suppose her), would ever shew disdain to any one who did not challenge it by some impropriety of her own. If therefore there is disdain, it is because the object of it would be avoided for something wrong, and perhaps innately and individually vulgar, even if she were a duchess herself."

"What this *innate* vulgarity is," observed I, "whether in high or low, is what I shall delight to learn from one who is so good a judge."

"Surely it is not difficult," said Lady Hungerford. "For if vulgarity is so offensive as to be hated and banished from our circles, it is because a really natural born vulgar is so *faulty* a character. He respects or rather loves no one but himself. He certainly shews no respect to others, but is a mere selfish, isolated sensualist ; a sort of moral sloth in his tree, who, studying only his own comfort or his own interest, cares not how much he shocks the feelings or invades the convenience of another. Hence, common civility and the *bienséances* are too much trouble for him, and he neglects

them in his manners, in his language, and even in his thoughts. Hence, he is coarse, boisterous, impudent, and insulting; indelicate in his ideas and in his language. If he argue with you, he is a bear; and if he wishes to pay court, a monkey. He is always self-sufficient, consults nobody's feelings, laughs at everybody's sensibilities, and, in short, when under no restraint, is often a brute."

To this just as well as eloquent account of the really vulgar man, I had nothing to oppose; but, to draw her out still further (for her impressiveness only added to her beauty), I asked why a mere difference of appearance, such as we call uncouthness, should be deemed, as it generally is, vulgarity?

"Are you quite right in that opinion?" asked she. "Is uncouthness necessarily vulgar? Is it more than something strange or unusual in dress or manners (I do not mean morals), to which we are not accustomed? If this be so, should Queen Elizabeth herself appear again in her ruff and farthingale, she would be the height of uncouthness, but she would not be vulgar."

"Not vulgar, possibly," returned I, "but surely ridiculous, which is perhaps akin to it."

"Not," replied the lady (looking much in earnest), "if it proceeded not from some defect of character. For if being merely innocently ridiculous made us vulgar, I don't know what would become of '*nousautres*.' No; I still say that the vulgarity which we so detest, and of which alone we are talking, must take its rise from something unsound in the mind or heart; something which, as it certainly may be found among the upper ranks, so the lower may as certainly be exempt from it."

"I fear to ask," said I, "for the proofs of this among the upper ranks."

"Why, there is always vulgarity, at least of mind," answered Lady Hungerford, "where there is silly affectation, low-thoughted pride (as of purse or other prosperity) towards our inferiors, or envy, hatred, and malice towards our superiors; or, what is worse, a despicable attempt, by flattery or parasitical attentions, to obtain their notice, or insinuate ourselves into their acquaintance. Such is the case of all *parvenus*, who have not sense or pride of mind enough to use their good fortune properly, but barter the diamond of their independence for the Bristol stone of vanity. As nothing is so soon seen through by people of real fashion, so nothing is so much ridiculed or contemned."

Having said this, she added with a good-humoured smile, "This I think is enough for to-day's lesson, so now we will break up school, and you may go play."

I heard all this with regret, for I was absolutely charmed; but

seeing she was engaged, I took my leave with all necessary acknowledgments.

Certainly there is no pleasure more gratifying than to listen to refined sense, falling from the lips of a refined and beautiful woman.

CHAPTER VIII.

OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF MANKIND WHICH BEING IN OFFICE PRODUCES, AND OF THE HAPPINESS OF COURTS AND COURTIER'S, IN THE OPINION OF A PHILOSOPHIC MINISTER.

The art of the court,
As hard to leave as keep; whose top to climb
Is certain falling; or so slippery, that
The fear's as bad as falling.

SHAKSPEARE.—*Cymbeline*.

WHILE I was thus progressing in the knowledge of high life, under the auspices of this charming lady, who by opening her evening saloon to me added practical lessons to theory, I found I was not behindhand in what was still more important, my official business. The ability of Lord Castleton filled me with respect, while his kind as well as polished manners would have won me to him, had he been, what he was not, one of those every-day ministers who get into office without knowing how; some as Corinthian capitals, in the shape of high titles; some from a reputation, nobody knows by what means acquired, and forfeited as soon as brought to the test. These are often continued in place because they happen to be there; and sometimes are kept in merely to keep others out. The presiding geniuses, such a Lord Castleton, were few. They did all the work, and directed affairs, while the rest pocketed their salaries, content to do what they were bid, and be well paid for doing so.

My place in Lord Castleton's estimation having become known, procured me many introductions and acquaintances; how many friends I know not, for that test of friendship, the vacating of office, had not occurred, so I was sought after, courted, and *fêted*, by men and women of all ranks—the men, for supposed patronage; the women, to frank their gowns and muffs through the post-office and customs.

My power was supposed both great and inexhaustible. Everybody knew that Lord Castleton governed the realm, and thought I had at least a jackal's share with him. If I was seen, as was sometimes the case, going with him in his chariot to his villa at Roehampton,

though our conversation was of the lightest kind, I was set down as depositary of all the secrets of Europe. It reminded me of Swift's intercourse with Lord Oxford :—

“ When what's o'clock? and how's the wind?
Whose coach is that we left behind?
And all such tattle, entertains
My lord and me as far as Staines,
And though what passes *inter nos*
Might be proclaim'd at Charing Cross,
And though I solemnly declare
I know no more than my lord-mayor,
They stand amaz'd, and think me grown
The closest mortal ever known.”

I was much amused, but sometimes teased and sometimes revolted, by the consequences of this opinion, which, the more I sought to refute it, the stronger it grew, and often shewed itself in the shape of offered bribes, more or less covered. One great lady, who had a son to promote, sent me opera tickets for six months, till the place she wanted was filled up, when the tickets came no more. A duke always invited me to his *battues*, and sent me game besides, while the lieutenancy of his county was vacant; though not even Lord Castleton had any thing to do with it. He got it from other interest, and from that instant no more invitations.

One of the highest of the female *haute noblesse*, who was courted, like the sun by the Persians, for one genial ray, after I had been six months installed with Lord Castleton most graciously admitted me amongst her elect. I plumed myself upon it with Lady Hungerford. She smiled mischievously, and said, “Don't be too sure; wait till you or your patron is out of office.” She was right.

A great colonist offered me one day twenty thousand acres of unreclaimed land, adding, if I did not like to turn settler myself, they might be sold to advantage. A West-India house sent me turtles; an East-India, a pipe of madeira; all which I returned, and made them enemies instead of friends.

In a smaller way, I was invited to more dinners in one year than I could eat in ten.

All this I communicated to Lord Castleton, who enjoyed it himself, and said it would be “nuts” for Fothergill; to whom, to Manners, and my family, I gave a regular account of my progress, and was pleased with the pleasure which my brothers expressed at t' young doctor's success.

One other consequence of this success was not unamusing. Several men whom I had known by sight at Oxford, in the walks and coffee-houses, to some of whom I had had slight introductions, but which they did their utmost to forget, were now of a sudden visited with a

most accurate power of memory, and at Lord Castleton's table, or evening parties, and even, some of them, at the Opera and St. James's, reminded me *cordially* of our former acquaintance, observing, often, that one great advantage of going to college was the making acquaintance with those whom they were afterwards to meet in the world. But *vogue la galère*, as the proverb says, and let us not be over nice as to the means.

From what I have related, a prospect which I had not exactly contemplated opened wide before me, in the knowledge of mankind which my situation promised to me. Other professions are in this respect confined chiefly to an intercourse with their own class : merchants with merchants, soldiers with soldiers, scholars with scholars, and even ministers with ministers. These last are too great, or too occupied with great affairs, to see the world in all its phases. It is their secretaries and confidants on whom the preliminary matters devolve without disguise, or with less of it ; who hear and see characters, and examine cases, in more nakedness than their principals.

For example, I had not been a week installed, before a very popular member for a very populous place, where the election was always popular, came to me, and very frankly told me he would save me all the trouble he could ; for that though, from the nature of his constituency, he should have to pester me with applications for Jack, Tom, and Harry, yet unless he marked *special* upon them, I need not attend to them, still less need I trouble Lord Castleton ;—all he wanted being the power of *honestly* assuring his constituents that he had made application for them !

This was a curious instance of what is called cheating the devil.

I was myself, however, a little put to it, as to the portion of honesty I was expected to infuse into the civility necessary to be shewn to my numerous applicants. To hear or read their cases was half my day's work, and, I own, to escape the reproach of insincerity was the most difficult part of my position. I wrote to Manners about this, and in answer, he told me I could not do better than consult Lord Castleton himself, who was always pleased with ingenuousness.

I did so, and laid before him the difficulties which my inexperience in a political office daily occasioned. He was amused with many cases I described to him, and told me to expect many more. “As for the honesty,” observed he, “which you tell me is in such danger, all I can tell you is, preserve it, *coûte que coûte*.”

I honoured him for this reply, to which he added a recommendation of a passage in one of Chesterfield's letters, which he said was a sort of breviary for men in office, though he feared, like other breviaries, too often neglected.

“The qualifications in the practical part of business are, an ab-

solute command of temper; patience to hear frivolous, impertinent, and unreasonable applications; with address enough to refuse, without offending, or, by your manner of granting, to double the obligation; dexterity enough to *conceal a truth without telling a lie.*"

"Is not this," said I, somewhat startled, "contradicting the excellent maxim of Cicero, that truth means, not only the not telling what is false, but the not concealing what is true?"

"Very like a good scholar of Fothergill," replied Lord Castleton; "but you are to mark that this applies only to history, and to those cases where to reveal a fact is a duty, not where to ask a thing may be an *impertinence*. As there can be no merit in bluntness, so there can be no harm in civility."

He then told me a *bon mot* of the king in regard to one of his colleagues, who was what is called a rough diamond, and, from the effect of his very honesty, the most unpopular of the cabinet. Lord Castleton, who respected him, said one day to the king (who had himself experienced his roughness), that it was a pity; for that if he were only commonly civil, his virtue was such, that he might do any thing: "Yes," answered the king, "or if only commonly *uncivil.*"

One of the first things that struck me was, the nature and despotism of party. People who are only public men while they are reading the papers, or conversing sheerly upon measures as they appear to the world, have no sort of notion of the influence of this potent spell, which, like the spell of enchanters, controls nature itself. I own, with all my knowledge of history, I was one of these ignoramuses, and thought that the being a public man did not preclude a person from calling black, black, and white, white. I found I was mistaken, and that neither great virtue nor great fortune could exempt a man enrolled in party, any more than if he were enrolled in the army, from thinking, speaking, and looking as his commanding officers ordered him.

It was an obstinacy in a contrary opinion that drove Manners out of Parliament, for in this he was "*ortus a quercu, non a salice.*"

My attention was first called to this, by a sort of dispute upon it, at Lord Castleton's table.

"With my castle in the north, and 15,000*l.* a-year, who shall dare," said a young Hotspur, animating in the argument, "to prescribe how I shall vote. What can I care for ambition?"

"More perhaps than you are aware of," said an old politician, to whom he was addressing himself; "go, live a common-place life at your fine castle, and see what will come of it. See nobody

¹ "Ne quid falsi dicere audeat, ne quid veri non audeat."

but the little people of the neighbourhood, grow as rusty as they, and be ready to give your ears, though in vain, for such company as this. Depend upon it you will soon wish yourself back again."

"But why may I not be, what a very virtuous nobleman was said to be, in his epitaph?—

'Courtied by all parties,
Enlisted in none '."

"Very good," said his cool Nestor; "and if you enlist in none, you will be neglected by all."

"Why?"

"Because, great and wise as you may think yourself, and virtuous as you may intend to be, you will pass your life among the common herd, without power, and, therefore, without consequence."

Hotspur bit his lips, and said, rather than that should be, he would go back to Northumberland.

"And be the melancholy lord of it, as he is called in the play¹," said his antagonist.

The best of it was, that Hotspur, having actually fled to his northern fastness, to indulge his virtuous indignation, was so sickened with spleen, caused by inaction, that, unable to persuade himself, as at first he had resolved, to vacate his seat, he returned to St. Stephen's, and became ever after one of the hottest party men that ever blew the political trumpet.

Observations on these scenes and characters formed an inexhaustible source of both amusement and improvement, particularly when, after a few months, I no longer felt a fresh-man in London; and their effect upon me formed sometimes a diverting speculation for Lord Castleton himself, who said I was the most admirable touchstone, from being totally unsophisticated, that since the days of Fothergill he had ever met with. He was, indeed, particularly interested in observing how by degrees the rust of my Oxford gown, as he called it, wore off, and how well I took to the training both of Lady Hungerford's saloon and of our own official commerce with men.

In the latter I grew so thoroughly imbued, that one would suppose I had been bred to it all my life. The very air of Downing-street, as it was different to all other atmospheres, so it seemed more wholesome and necessary to those who breathed it; so that I was not at all surprised that they who, from any accident, or revolution in politics, were deprived of it, never found themselves well

¹ Henry, third Lord Lonsdale.

² Saw you the melancholy Lord Northumberland?—*Richard III.*

afterwards. The effect, also, of this atmosphere was always visible in the countenance and manner of those who dwelt in it. It followed them into all other places ; to court especially, and the houses of Parliament ; so that you might easily perceive in what quarter of the town they dwelt, by their complacency ; while those who never had been there, but particularly if they had been and were expelled, shewed all the symptoms of a change for the worse.

And yet, for all this, I cannot say, from my experience, that these minions of office or court favour were positively or abstractedly happy ; and so I told my patron, who often amused himself with what he called my *philosophy* on these subjects, the offspring, he said, of my intimacy with Fothergill and Manners.

One part indeed, and that not a small one, of the pleasure I took in my situation, was the frank communication of himself often made by this excellent, and, though a minister, this guileless man, in moments when it seemed a relief to him to unbend with a person he could confide in.

Finding him one morning reading Boyle on “ Things above Reason,” instead of official papers, and very philosophically inclined, I propounded my doubts to him on the happiness of courtiers.

“ You are right,” he said. “ There is a great difference between positive happiness, and the absence of its contrary. Office and power are indeed notorious for their accompanying cares, and only two things can compensate to a man who dedicates himself to them, for the sacrifice he makes of his independence. For who the deuce, for the rewards of a few hundreds a-year, which will not pay for his dinners or court suits, would sacrifice his days and nights, to be abused and vilified into the bargain, by at least one half of those whom he is endeavouring to serve ?

“ How often in the recess of my closet, and the silence of the night, after a hard-fought day, and I had been forced to listen to impertinencies which, as a public man, you must submit to, but which no private man would bear, have I pondered those lines of Cowper, which so well describe what we are discussing :—

‘ To be suspected, thwarted, and withstood,
E’en when he labours for his country’s good ;
To see a band call’d *patriot*, for no cause,
But that they catch at popular applause,
Careless of all the anxiety he feels,
Hook disappointment on the public wheels :
With all their flippant fluency of tongue,
Most confident, when palpably most wrong ;
If this be kingly, then farewell for me
All kingship, and may I be poor and free.’ ”

I admired both the sentiment in these lines, and the feeling.

manner of Lord Castleton's reciting them ; but could not help asking to know what were the two things which bore a minister up so as to overcome such disgusts.

"They are," answered he, "either a sincere and disinterested wish to serve the state, or an ambition (the reverse of disinterested) to serve one's self. To this indeed, where the disposition is not over sweet, you may add a third—that of destroying your rivals. The latter may excite, but it will certainly not make you happy ; and, steeped as I may be supposed to be in the love of power, one hour of Manners's Grange, in positive satisfaction, is worth a year of our fancied enjoyments."

Finding him thus disposed to unbend upon a subject so delicate, I ventured to ask why, if such were his feelings, he persisted in a pursuit he found so little happy.

"An important question," said he, "difficult to answer, and I believe I must refer you to La Bruyère to solve it. '*La cour ne rend pas heureux, mais empêche de l'être ailleurs.*' I believe that is the real secret ; and if I did not think so, I would be off to Castleton to-morrow."

He said this with so resolute an air that I began to fear something had gone wrong ; and when I saw how intent he seemed on Boyle, I trembled not a little with apprehension for my own position, with which I by no means had found myself disposed to quarrel. I was relieved, however, by my patron's adding, that, although the many factions he had to encounter gave him much trouble, yet as long as they were palpably *factions*, and not a liberal and virtuous opposition to his measures, he felt that both duty and honour forbade him to crown such unpatriotic conduct with success, by retiring from fear, or perhaps in a pet.

I highly approved these sentiments.

"To return, however, to our point," said he, "you young aspirants would do well not to let yourselves be dazzled with the outside of a court, or with the outside of any thing, public or private. For many an aching, as well as a mean heart, 'lurks beneath a star.' By the way," proceeded he, taking up a *brochure* which had just been sent him, "here is the best comment made to my hand on this last observation."

So saying, he made me read from a French memoir recently published at Paris :—

"La Marquise de Pompadour n'était pas heureuse. Que lui manquait-il donc ? La paix de l'âme, *première condition du bonheur*. Dévorée de chagrins, excitant l'envie, profondément affligée du malheur de vieillir ; honteuse, comme elle dit, d'avoir servi des *hommes médiocres* qui n'ont su faire que des révérences et des bassesses ; adorée de mille gens, *aimée de personne* ; lasse et

même détrompée de la faveur, elle demandait quelquefois à la fortune de l'en débarrasser; et l'instant d'après elle révoquait un vœu dont l'accomplissement l'eût désespérée¹."

"Now," added Lord Castleton, "we have only, in this account, to change a marquise for a marquis, and we have here a pretty good picture of any courtier or minister of an ill-regulated ambition. Certainly the want of the *paix de l'âme*, *première condition du bonheur*, may attend my lord as well as my lady; certainly, also, if he has not (perhaps even if he has) a philosophic mind, he may be *dévoré de chagrins*, and, according to his character (though, thank heaven, that is not my predicament), may be *profondément affligé du malheur de vieillir*. It is very certain that he may have promoted *des hommes médiocres* (no reflection upon your excellency), and repented of it; and too true, that he may be worshipped by numbers, and beloved of none. Finally, let me wind up with the falling Wolsey—

‘O! how wretched
Is that poor man who hangs on princes’ favours!
There is between that smile we would aspire to,
That sweet aspect of princes and our ruin,
More pangs and fears than wars or women have.’”

I was struck with the energy, denoting sincerity, with which he uttered this, and waited silently, in the hope that he would continue, which he presently did.

"Nobody," said he, "would believe me if I affected to despise political ambition; but this I am sure of, that one page of this book (pointing to the volume of Boyle) studied in the closet, with a heart expanding to the bounties and wonders of the Creator there described, makes all the glittering pageants of party success mean in comparison."

The emphasis of his manner increased as he went on with this, and I continued at first quite silent; pondering, in fact, these very weighty considerations, and happy in being thought worthy of his confidence in a matter of some delicacy, when treated by a minister.

At length I ventured to ask, whether these remarks were not applicable to the meridian of despotic countries, France or Germany, rather than England.

"I have heard," said I, "that a minister out of office abroad is what is called *disgracié*, that is, *banni dans ses terres*; or perhaps to Siberia; which they hold to be disgrace enough. But an English minister often triumphs in turning his back upon his power; at least, so he asserts."

"Do not believe him," said Lord Castleton, "even if he swore it.

¹ Essai sur la Marquise de Pompadour.

I do not deny that a man who has altogether miscalculated his own powers and character, and is totally unfit for what his vanity prompted him to court, or his weakness to accept, from persons as mistaken about him as himself—I do not deny that such a man, fit only to talk of bullocks or sail on a duck-pond, may be so frightened and pummelled by a rough sea, as to be glad to be relieved, even though he be hissed out of office. Lord——was hissed out of office, and was more happy in the relief than ashamed of the disgrace. But the pleasure of such a man upon his resignation, as you call it, can no more stamp him with the character of either dignity or philosophy, than a general who avoids a battle from cowardice can acquire the character of discretion. All other men, who are either dismissed from their power, or feel forced, whether by honour or necessity, to resign it, be assured do so with a secret regret ; at least, I never knew but one Lord Waldegrave.”

Upon my begging to understand this allusion, he told me that, in the time of George II., Lord Waldegrave, who had been his earliest friend when he first embarked in politics, had continued, against his wish, in the high post of governor of the Prince of Wales, now George III., solely to oblige the king—that he laboured to lay down his place for some time in vain, and applying to the Duke of Newcastle to assist him in doing so, his grace was absolutely astonished that such a thing could enter into a man’s head, and had not a conception that his situation could be unpleasant. “Perhaps,” said Lord Waldegrave, “measuring my feelings by his own, and thinking that from four years’ practice in politics I must have lost all sensibility”.

“No ;” continued Lord Castleton. “Believe that there are many more Dukes of Newcastle than Lords Waldegrave, among ministers when they retire. They may put a bold face upon it, and appear to themselves (to use your expression) to quit in triumph. They may even, if they please, fly in the face of the king, and affect to laugh at his court ; perhaps heroically abuse his person ; but, voluntary or not, there is scarcely one that does not sigh over his departure in secret, and would not hail with joy the moment of his return.”

An opinion thus delivered, and from such an authority, could not fail to have its due weight with me ; and I afterwards recorded *verbatim*, and with pleasure, the particulars of this interesting conversation.

* Waldegrave’s Memoirs, 70.

CHAPTER IX.

THE SUBJECT CONTINUED.—MY KNOWLEDGE OF THE WORLD INCREASES, AS I OBSERVE THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN REAL AND FACTITIOUS GREATNESS.

O! place and greatness, millions of false eyes
Are stuck upon thee! Volumes of report
Run with these false and most contrarious guests
Upon thy doings. Thousand 'scapes of wit
Make thee the father of their idle fancies.

SHAKSPEARE.—*Measure for Measure.*

FROM the latter part of the last chapter it may have appeared that of courts and courtiers I had begun to form a pretty fair estimate, neither affecting philosophically to despise them, as those unacquainted with them pretend to do, nor, on the other hand, giving them a consequence to which they are not entitled.

With regard to the philosophic coxcombs who undervalue the great because they are not great themselves, I soon found out their selfish error; for it is most certain there were as many, or, in proportion to their numbers, more men, and women too, of worth, and certainly of pleasing manners, than in the ranks from which I had been elevated. There was indeed this difference in favour of the great, that where they were selfish, envious, false, revengeful, or malicious, in the same manner as their inferiors were all these, they shewed it not with the same coarseness, and rendered not vice more hideous by their mode of indulging it.

I discovered, too, that what I had been disposed to think without knowing why—namely, that there is a respect which we voluntarily give to greatness, distinct from riches—was true; and that the hold upon opinion which greatness possesses is of a kind, and also of an extent, which riches of themselves cannot attain.

I had sometimes puzzled myself to make this out, but I was now in a field where I could observe it, and I found it arose from the difference in the associations belonging to the two classes of people.

Thus to come to particulars, the reader may perhaps remember a very rich and very foolish Mr. Shanks, at Queen's, the son of a foolish father, but a *millionnaire*. This young minion of wealth, when he knew my position with Lord Castleton, was glad to claim acquaintance with me; nay, made his father call upon me, which forced me to return his visit. I called upon him, therefore, in return, and was let into his fine hall by his fine porter; a fine foot-

man, with gold-laced kneebands, conducted me to the stairs, and a still finer gentleman in silk stockings asked me whom he should announce. He preceded me to the drawing-room, where I saw crimson and gold chairs, crimson and gold curtains, mirrors in gold, and pictures in gold.

All this while I walked with a firm step and an equal pulse; I had not considered one single moment whether there was any thing in the shape of superiority which might inspire particular reverence in the deity who presided over this temple of Mammon. He was once, as I had been informed, a ragged schoolboy, for whom sometimes another ragged schoolboy made his exercise to save him from a flogging—being in fact a very great dunce. He was afterwards a clerk to a merchant, banker, broker, or what not, till by a fortunate concurrence of circumstances he set up for himself, and by loans, contracts, and other speculations, he achieved his million, and now acts the grandee.

What has such a man done—what is there in his manners, or the associations thrown about him by his life, that should make me consider him one pin's point more than I should have done had I been at school with him, when he could not construe his Cæsar; or in Sun Court (so called, like *lucus a non lucendo*, because the sun never enters it), where he made his first essay in business, in copying letters, or the “Price Current?”

I mean not to undervalue him for this; on the contrary, if he had borne his good fortune meekly, I could have rejoiced with him. What I observe is, how little there was in him, from his fortune alone, his three courses and champagne, that should fix my attention or interest me one moment longer, or more intensely, than if he were still glad of a luncheon with a glass of porter in an oyster shop, as is said was formerly the case.

Now take me to one of the real nobles of the land—I mean not merely the titled, but the highly-gifted and politely-educated as well as highly-descended, men, and women too, who have passed their lives and cultivated their manners in an undeviating intercourse with persons like themselves, the genuine great as well as rich. I do not say I respect their gold merely as such, more than that of the ostentatious *parvenu*; for, for gold alone there is no respect; but there is something in their magnificence, which, in consequence of the attributes of the owners, creates different sensations. I have heard of a tailor, who joining usury to tailoring, together made 500,000*l.*, and had cut velvet beds of 300*l.* apiece. Who could forbear laughing at his chamber thus furnished? while the same costliness in a royal palace would only call forth part of the respect naturally due to royalty.

I enter the house of a great statesman or noble, imbued with the

fair consciousness of his dignity (dignity, not pride); I feel not the same indifference which I did at the mansion of the mushroom Shanks. In respect to the one, my associations call up an interest and deference towards the person I come to visit; to the other respect, if you please, for his character, if he deserve it, but none at all from association.

But let me not fall into the injustice of censuring a whole class on account of examples which form only exceptions. Shanks was contemptible, because he knew not the true use of riches, and employed them only to shew he never could be what he affected—the true man of quality. Others, content with being what they are, produce and spread their advantages before the world, to the world's benefit, and their own credit. My situation made me known to other *millionnaires*, very different from the *bourgeois gentil-homme* I have been speaking of. Nor can I forget an Easter which with Granville I once passed with Mr. Fitzosbourne at his mansion in Hampshire. Like Shanks, he was not born to his wealth, but had obtained it by a happy concurrence of circumstances; but (not like Shanks) he avoided ostentation for the very reason for which the other practised it.

“I am not ashamed,” said he, “of having been the author of my own fortune; but if I were, the readiest mode of proclaiming it would be to shew myself vain of it.”

Accordingly, he lived handsomely, but not prodigally; had every comfort, and many luxuries, but without waste. His chief employment of the overplus of his wealth was in patronizing the arts, the improvement of the soil, and the employment and reward of his dependent poor. Of this his house, plantations, farms, and villages, gave ample and delightful proof; and the devotion of a numerous and accomplished family who adored him, and the blessings and prayers of an extensive neighbourhood, made up to his heart all that it wanted; for he sought not acquaintance merely because they were titled, or such as those who paid Shanks for the banquets he gave them, by undervaluing his taste, laughing at his extravagance, and cutting him at court.

It was really beautiful to see the modest meekness with which Mr. Fitzosbourne bore his prosperity; and with what little ostentation he displayed all the advantages of his immense fortune. All that riches demanded of him—elegance, and even magnificence—was gratified, but without self-sufficiency. To crown all, he lived in patriarchal happiness, amidst a numerous progeny, of whom the daughters, though all beautiful and accomplished, shewed no vanity, and the sons, though highly educated, no presumption. All of them seemed to emulate their father's good sense and plain simplicity of manners.

But to return to my general story. My object being now to know the world, in this greater university of it, the metropolis, after having been preparing for it in the perhaps more sacred, but less stirring or diversified scene of *Alma Mater*, I took every opportunity to study the many acquaintances to which my situation led, and also to increase them at all proper opportunities.

For this purpose, by Granville's advice and interest, and Lord Castleton's countenance, I procured myself to be nominated a member of more than one fashionable and political club ; and very curious it was to study, in their respective precincts, the public virtue of Whiggism ; the loyalty of Toryism ; the modesty of Dandyism ; and last, and not least, the sober, but not less consequential, bearing of the country gentlemen.

These, however, were at least approachable ; but, like the devils in Milton—

“ Others, apart, sat on a hill retired,
In thought more elevate ; ”

for they looked down upon everybody else as *taboo'd* from their society and conversation, and like the *Spectator*, were remarkable chiefly for never opening their lips except in their own club. These were the Exclusives, a class to be enrolled among whom the qualifications were totally undefinable ; for neither rank, fortune, parts, or virtue, gave a right to their privileges, which though for the most part originally usurped, yet when like other usurpations they were confirmed by consent, were defended with vigour against all pretenders. One only accomplishment I observed to be indispensable for success among them—that cool and impenetrable assurance which Fothergill had talked of as belonging to them, and without which no Exclusive could flourish.

In regard, however, to all these classes, the first observation I made was, that as a class they were all aristocrats ; and, what I thought strange, the Whigs, with the cause of the people for ever in their mouths in public, were the proudest and most exclusive of them all in private.

I asked Lord Castleton the reason of this, and he said he supposed that to think and hold themselves far higher in society than all other men or women (for this exclusiveness was most largely shared by the sex), was the only consolation they had for being so long out of office.

Be this as it may, I cultivated them all in their turn, with more or less success, and my daily advance in knowledge of my fellow-men was not less rapid than amusing. It was, however, still not so universal as I could have wished. The three learned professions, as they are called (though I should have thought them better styled

the three pedantries), law, physic, and divinity, were *sui generis*. They kept by themselves, and were unmixed, like the Jews (by the way, another class of some consequence at this time of day, in this commercial state); and I found that, to be a complete citizen of the world, much more was wanting than could be supplied at Tattersall's, or the clubs in St. James's-street.

I, however, as it was, got at a good deal of life, and by degrees came pretty well to know, and be known by, many lords and gentlemen of this era. In time, too, I broke ground with some of the most eminent of the class I have mentioned as *tabood* to all the rest. Those, however, I observed were the happiest who, though thought ordinary by the others, were content with their lot, and had little desire to quit it, though to be admitted within the magic circle of fashionable life, or even to be initiated in the mysteries of that *bona dea*—Exclusiveness.

One of the high priests of this goddess had now become an interesting object of my study, for it must be owned he was unique as to character, manners, and the good fortune that seemed always to attend him; so much so, that it would be an affront to the Lord Petronius not to let him have a chapter to himself.

CHAPTER X.

THE LORD PETRONIUS AND HIS CONTRAST.

There is a nobleman of the court at door, would speak to you.

SHAKESPEARE.—1 *Henry IV*.

Wilt thou dine with me, Apemantus?

No! I eat not Lords.

Timon of Athens.

THE Lord Petronius was one of my patron's brother ministers, and was so much a man (as I have called others) *sui generis*, and had acquired a sort of reputation with so little right to it, that he became the object of my study. He was not without parts, nor, as far as letters were concerned, had education been thrown away upon him. But he was the least of a man of business, and the most of a man of idleness, that ever sauntered on the political scene. I say sauntered, because, with fondness enough for office, and particularly its emoluments (wholly, however, with a view to gratify his voluptuousness and indolent disposition), he seemed to have little notion

that to know any thing, or do any thing, but pocket his salary, distribute his patronage, and live an easy court life, was the business of a minister.

Though, from a total want of energy, the Lord Petronius was any thing but an Alcibiades,—and, in this, did not resemble even the famous Roman courtier¹ whose name he bore,—yet, in most other things, he approached near to the latter person, as described by Tacitus. For, like him, “he was a voluptuary, who gave himself up to sleep all day, and spent the night in pleasures; and as other men made themselves famous for their industry, he gained his fame from idleness. Yet he was not considered a *mere* prodigal, but a man who knew how to spend his estate with a delicate palate. All his words were the more agreeable because they manifested a sort of unaffected freedom, and appeared to be spoken with a kind of pleasing neglect.”

So far the Roman, according to the historian of Rome. But the English lord, though a minister, added to this a philosophic indifference to all political reputation, and the thousand faults proved upon him, provided his place was not touched, gave him no care. For public opinion he had, indeed, from mere dissoluteness (not superiority of mind), the most entire contempt. He treated all men not in office, or not in Parliament (and even many who were), as Coriolanus did the mob—

“ Hang ’em ;—*they* say !—

They’ll sit by the fire and presume to know
What’s done i’ the Capitol.”

And yet, for the sake of popularity, as *a means of power*, Lord Petronius pretended to be the friend of these men whom in his heart he despised.

In his private life the same epicureanism was his distinguishing feature; *nil admirari*, together with a marked gallantry, and a fastidiousness, amounting to a disdainful coldness, towards his inferiors, placed him at the head of fashion, and went far (strange to say) to maintain him in his political power, whence, but for this, a total want of discretion, in not concealing his contempt for the business he was obliged to do, and the persons with whom he was obliged to do it, would have long ago dislodged him.

Being the focus of extensive connexions, all of them courtiers and deities of fashion, and himself what is called a complete woman’s man, he became a favourite in the highest circles, and had the address to be continued long on the list of the ministry.

Lord Castleton could well have spared him if he had chosen to go;

¹ Petronius Arbiter.

but he chose to stay, and was too highly connected to be removed. As my patron, therefore, sometimes in confidence remarked to me, he was one of those whom one meets with in the world, of whom we say (in our sleeve)—*Nec tecum possum vivere, nec sine te.*

He certainly was the first man (unless it was Sir Christopher Hatton¹) who had acquired and maintained a seat in the Cabinet from being an exquisite.

Indolent, however, and supercilious as Lord Petronius was, both as a man and a minister, he was forced sometimes to submit to bitter rebuffs, and bear lecturing from people he affected to despise, when talking of them with persons of his own class. For he was fond of appearing to be above being influenced by any consideration for those he called the *canaille*; that is, all who were not of his own clique, or at least who moved not in a certain sphere, much more subalterns or men in trade.

He once, however, received a most abrupt and unceremonious lesson from a rough political cynic of the lower order, who had no pretensions to dandyism himself, and did not like it the more because in the person of a minister. On the contrary, he had a sort of malevolent pleasure in telling coxcombs, high or low, what he thought of them. A paper detailing a little secret history was published by the cynic, as I have called him (and as Lord Petronius certainly thought him), which, as it was amusing, I have preserved.

A deputation, it seems from a considerable set of manufacturers, consisting of the rough, uncombed Cato I have mentioned, whose name was Crabthorn, and another, a Mr. Pliant (the very opposite to him in nerves, particularly afraid of a fashionable courtier, and only chosen on account of his commercial influence), waited upon Lord Petronius one day by appointment, in order to explain their case to him.

My lord had had the indiscretion to talk of their expected meeting as one of the bores of his office, calling them “apron-men,” and “*canaille*,” to whom *he was bound* to be civil, particularly on the eve of an election. This, as every thing is repeated, soon came to be known to our cynic and his timorous coadjutor—who attended in Downing Street with different feelings—the one blunt by nature, and proud of it, the other timorous, and particularly afraid of a great man’s disdain.

On their first arrival, the Cerberus, seeing they were of very extraordinary appearance, as usual growled a little, till the chief messenger appeared, who, as they stated that they came by appointment and delivered their cards, immediately assumed a tone of great civility, and requested them to walk up into the waiting-room, for my lord would see them directly.

¹ First promoted by Elizabeth for his fine dancing, afterwards made Chancellor.

The change of manner struck Mr. Pliant; but Crabthorn, an older stager, said it was all according to rule, and meant nothing.

“I can never instil into you,” said he, “that political influence, however trivial, and whether in the shape of a duke or a dustman, immediately levels all impediment and opens all doors. Now don’t be such a fool as to part with your own consequence before Lord Petronius; or, because his coat is better cut, and he makes a better bow (particularly when he bows you out, as he soon will do); in short, it is not because he would beat you in a ball or dancing-room, that you are to lose one atom of your weight with him on the business we are upon. Be assured we are of more consequence to him than he to us. Look around you; see these superb sofas, carpets, tables, and lounging-chairs; look out of window and enjoy the fine view; the park, the gardens, the distant palace, the water, the parade, the guards, the obsequious crowds coming and going, all circling round him in his orbit, like humble satellites. You may contrast this if you please with your own comparatively inferior, but not unreal importance; but I should be glad to know who it is that maintains my lord in all this pomp and power? Why, the public voice, or what we choose to call by that name; that is, you and I, and such as you and I. We influence an election; say but one. That is good. Suppose two. Better. But, better still, we here, at this hour, and upon our present business, influence a powerful party in Parliament. Perhaps ten votes will depend upon this conference. Do you think my lord will not be civility itself? Did you not see how his groom crouched? Hold up your head, man; there’s money bid for you.”

Mr. Pliant said all this was true enough, and he did not much fear the reception that day with my lord.

“But, were we in a court drawing-room,” said he, “would not he laugh at our homeliness? and has he not called us *canaille* and apron-men, to his brother courtiers?”

“Perhaps in secret he would laugh,” said Crabthorn; “that is, in his sleeve. Let him. We laugh in our’s at him, and force him to play the hypocrite while we are honest men.”

This opinion was afterwards communicated to the Lord Petronius himself, in no very measured terms. For though the application was granted, and, as was intended, with uncommon graciousness, it was a graciousness by no means approved by the sturdy feelings of Mr. Crabthorn, who complained that there was far too much condescension in it for a Briton to submit to. He therefore wrote him the following letter:—

“My Lord—Our interview being over, allow me to express our satisfaction at the promise you have given to support the object of our application, and at the same time our wish that we could thank

you more than we do, for the pain it must have cost you to infuse so much condescension into your reception of us. Is not condescension, my lord, a force put upon the sincerity of some very great man, when, for objects of his own, he feels obliged to shew civility to a very little one? We have heard of the compliment you paid us in the appellation you bestowed upon us of 'apron-men,' and '*canaille*,' to whom you were forced to be civil. You, my lord, are indeed no 'apron-man,' in the sense in which you used the term, whatever you may be under another and very different signification of it, in which perhaps you glory. In this sense you do, indeed, I believe, understand *aprons* better than we. You are the head of fashion, and, for what reason we know not, you are kept in the cabinet as a court favourite.

"To this we must all defer, and allow you to disdain, at the same time that you use us. It is fit, however, that you should know this conduct is reciprocal; and, while we laugh at your finery as well as hypocrisy, we use you in our turns in support of our object. All the difference is this small one—that *you* are a courtier and a hypocrite; we plebeians and honest men."

Stinging as this letter was, and degrading as it might seem to a mind of common mould, I must do Lord Petronius the justice to say he was a great deal above being hurt by it. At least so he carried it in public. He read it, for their amusement, to all his friends, the ladies of the bed-chamber and maids of honour in particular, who all admired the uncommon test of fashion which his apathy upon it exhibited.

I own myself I envied him this impervious structure of mind, which, I was told, was the very first quality an English minister of state could possess; and on the force of this example, and one or two others, afforded by the same noble lord, I set it down in my tablet, that not merely in the case of the exclusives above mentioned, one great cause of success in this world was IMPENETRABLE ASSURANCE.

Of this, in the person of the same Lord Petronius, the following was another instance.

A gay lady, not over celebrated for correctness, and the known mistress of one of Lord Petronius's most intimate friends, thinking it was only fair to have a share in that friendship, admitted my lord into a considerable portion of her good graces. They had frequent meetings, but their rendezvous was at last discovered by the little accident, that the injured party had repaired to the same spot on a business of his own of the same kind.

The whole town rang with the scandal, and in my simplicity I said to Granville, when he told me the story, that I supposed Lord

Petronius had fled to the groves and fields of the country, to avoid the shame of the *éclat*.

Granville, pitying my *naïveté*, laughingly observed, that he had certainly fled to groves and fields, but not of the country; for they were the groves of Kensington and Hyde Park.

“Heavens!” exclaimed I—“what, to make his shame more notorious? Why, everybody would point at him.”

“The very thing he wishes,” replied Granville; “for do you not see that his consequence in the world depends upon his notoriety? As to the shame, therefore, it causes but little difficulty; nay, he would glory in it everywhere, but for the correctness of the court, which he is forced to regard. In all other places, his reputation is increased by it; and his very place in the ministry depending upon his character for fashion, this discovery is rather to his advantage than otherwise.”

“To me,” said I, “this is quite unaccountable.”

“Indeed! Pray how long have you been in London?”

“Six months.”

“And have not discovered that to brazen out a thing which common minds would be ashamed of, is the only way for an uncommon one to succeed in acquiring a great fashionable reputation, or to preserve it if already acquired!”

So much for Lord Petronius, whose pardon I must implore, if here, as it were in the same breath, I speak, and place by his side, another character, as opposite to his as light to darkness, as to principles and manners; and yet not far from resembling him in self-sufficiency or pride.

He was an old college acquaintance of mine, whom I now met with in London, Roger Testwood; a man of much mind, and little fortune, good connections, but of so touchy a nature that he could never turn them to account. They would all have helped him, more or less, in his race in life; but unhappily, to offer help was to affront him. One of them, a distinguished prelate, promised to provide for him, if he would take orders; but, he said he would not be toad-eater to any bishop in England. Another, a judge, proposed the bar; but as he could not *hug* attornies, he was sure he never should succeed. The army: he was too old to be commanded by boys. A place at court: he was a gentleman, but not a gentleman usher. Parliament: he would not condescend to be a party man.

He was fond of making tours to gratify his love of scenery, but always by himself; for he never would pay tribute, he said, to the vanity of the rich, by visiting their show-houses. He could therefore accompany no one who had not the same temper; and though an amateur of painting, he often refused himself the pleasure of

inspecting a rich cabinet, because it administered, he thought, to a triumph over him to which the owner had no right.

What could such a man do? Too fond of the hum of the world, though he affected to despise it, to shut himself up in a country village, he lived in retreat indeed, but at Kensington, whence he daily visited London; and though cutting (because he declared he was cut by) everybody, he lived a mere, though a keen looker-on; now and then bringing his talents to bear in criticising men and manners, in which he was too sour to be just; or works of literature, in which his taste and judgment were conspicuous.

This gentleman and myself, though not what might be called intimate, had had a very fair university acquaintance. That is, we were not ashamed, if chance brought it about, (for it never was by design), of being seen sometimes arm-in-arm with one another. We met sometimes too at wine parties after dinner; nay, and had played at bowls together in the bowling-green at New College, of which he was a member. And yet, far from claiming me as an acquaintance after my elevation, he had never come near me.

It was by the chance of belonging to the same club that we renewed our intercourse, and it was not his fault that we did not continue to stand aloof. For though he had so far consented to inspect society as to belong to the club, it was with little view of mixing in it as an associate. He had the fewest possible acquaintance, and seemed to wish those few less in number; sitting generally in a corner by himself, with his hat over his eyes, yet, observing every thing, and listening to everybody, but speaking to none.

Thus it was a week before I had exactly made him out, and when I rather reproached him, as he owned he knew me from the first, for not accosting me, he drily said, he wished to see whether a scholar of Queen's and a minister's secretary could continue one and the same person; and only because he found this might be, he consented to renew his acquaintance with me.

This sort of character, from being uncommon, became an object of my study, particularly as it was contrasted with another, also an Oxford companion, of about the same intimacy, and known to him as well as me, but opposite to him in every particular. This was a young man of the name of Sweetland, who certainly deserved his name, for his temper and civility seemed as sleek as his skin, which always shone with a neatness that was spotless. His perpetual readiness to oblige had already done wonders for him, and though not so well connected, and by no means so enlightened as Testwood, he was far better welcomed in society; and while friend Roger was pouting lonely in his corner, Sweetland was rarely seen but in a knot either of politicians or dandies; the first, often men of con-

sequence, who made use of him; the last, men of fashion, who tolerated him.

With all his fault's Testwood had most of my attention. I soon found he was any thing but happy, and having long known the cause, I was sometimes smitten with the hope of curing his error. The curate and barber had as much chance of curing Don Quixotte.

I one day called upon him in his box near Kensington. I was on horseback, and after reconnoitring me from a window, he opened the door himself.

"From your groom's livery," said he, "I thought you had been Lord Rockville, whose *triennial* visit I have sworn never to receive again. I neither seek, nor does he owe me any civility; but civility once in three years is an insult."

"I am sorry you think so," said I, "nor have I ever heard that Lord Rockville insulted any one."

"Judge for yourself," answered he. "I had once occasion to send to him to ask for a piece of official information, which he is paid for giving; and he began his reply with 'Lord Rockville *informs* Mr. Testwood so and so,'—as if Mr. Testwood was not worthy the little civility of note compliments. But this perhaps would not appear to you an insult. You, who are already rubbed smooth by the world, and bask in its sunshine, can know nothing of its coldness or its pride. You, and those you herd with, are too dependant upon one another to see each other's faults, or the faults of our vitiated society. I am not a Cato, or a Cassius, but neither am I made 'to bend in awe of such a thing as I myself.' I therefore keep all usurped superiority at a distance, and hold all expression of it insulting."

"But I have heard you say," said I, "that Lord Rockville was even your schoolfellow."

"Yes; and he once, and once only, actually asked me to dinner, and, as I had no reason to expect such a thing, I own I was pleased. But, would you believe it? I found it was only to fill a place at his table, made vacant by the sudden failure of another guest. The shortness of the notice, and my meeting him casually in the street, might have told me this, but I was a fool, and did not immediately observe it. However, I duly appreciated it, and resolved never to go again."

"He asked you then again, and you refused?"

"Why no, I cannot say that; but I *would have* refused, had he invited me."

This recurrence to what I knew was his dominant feeling at college shewed me that it had never quitted him during our separation; but I, as usual, combated it.

"Poor Lord Rockville!" said I. "I cannot help thinking this a

little hard; that because a man, who, you say yourself, owes you no civility at all, paid you some little of what he did not owe, he is therefore to be called proud and insulting! Why not accept of good when it is offered, because it happens not to be *more* good than we have a right to? You remember our fellow-collegian Sweetland. See how he has got on."

"I beseech you," cried Testwood sternly, "affront me not by so nauseating an example. Poor as I comparatively am, I would not exchange lots with Sweetland for all that he calls honour. He 'cannot dig,' but 'to beg he is *not* ashamed;' and though he has turned his begging to account, he is still the beggar, still the sycophant he always was—in short, the dependant though successful tool of an ambition (silly in itself), to be tolerated by fine people, who would not care a farthing if he were hanged."

"Are you not too hard upon him?" asked I. "I allow his nonsense, and his love for the honourables, and the Lady Marys, to whose notice he could not originally have pretended. But is it more than justice to say, that they are the sort of people, whom, without their titles or finery, he would have sought for as his companions? How then can we blame him?"

All the answer I could get to this was—"The fellow avoided me once, because he was riding with a duke, and I on foot. Are such things to be borne?"

"Are you sure of your *because*?" said I. "Might he not have been so occupied as not to have seen you?"

"Yes; occupied, I say, with a duke, whose tool he is. Psha! It is too ridiculous to defend him. Pass to any other subject."

Seeing he grew angry, to appease him, I answered, "You are at least safe in this new residence you have chosen, and escape the heart-burnings you have experienced."

But here also I failed; for, like other people who have weaknesses of which they do not wish to be reminded, he is extremely jealous of being thought jealous.

"I have no heart-burnings," said he, "and never had; and to say so, only makes you out one of those 'd——d good-natured friends,' always on the quest for faults, under pretence of curing them."

I found I had received my quietus, and hence-forward gave up my intention to reclaim him.

CHAPTER XI.

A MAN OF QUALITY NONDESCRIPT.—MORE OF GRANVILLE AND LADY HUNGERFORD.—
WITH THE LATTER I HAVE AN INTERESTING INTERVIEW.—OF THE FEELING SHE
DISPLAYED, AND OF THE MYSTERY WHICH ACCOMPANIED IT.

—————
If I could meet that fancy-monger, I would give him some good counsel.

I am he who was so love-shaked;
I pray you tell me your remedy.

SHAKSPEARE.—*As You Like It.*

THE heroes of my last chapter have too long detained me from persons of more consequence to my own heart and mind. For such a friend as Granville, I have neglected the mention of him too long. He came to me often, and did me much good in polishing off Oxford rust, and putting me *au fait* of things and characters which were quite new to me.

I rewarded him by talking to him, and allowing him to talk to me, of Lady Hungerford. In this I had a fellow-feeling, for it was evident he loved that superior person both with fondness and admiration, yet with very little hope, even had he been in circumstances to address her.

When I combated this, and observed upon the complacency with which she always spoke to, and of him, he would shake his head, and say, it was merely her good-nature towards a person who she could not help seeing was her slave.

“For,” said he, “with a thousand in her train, I acquit her of all coquetry. I only wish her nature was not so kind. Could I think myself ill-used, as you once said in regard to Bertha, I possibly might get free. You have, however, got free without ill-usage.”

“If I have done so,” returned I, with a sigh, “it has been from despair; but you have shewn me no reason why *you* should despair. You have at least never been dismissed.”

“I have never been delirious,” answered he, smiling, “in the presence of a waiting gentle-woman.”

This produced much talk both of Bertha and Lady Hungerford, in which Granville owned to me that his hopes, or rather his feelings (for hopes he had none), were as chimerical as mine had been for Bertha.

“That fatal winter at Paris!” said he. “Who could see her, the admired, *par excellence*, for elegance, *tournure*, and bril-

liancy, even in that brilliant capital, and not love, though despairing of success? Pronounced by the queen (herself a perfect judge) the most perfect woman of fashion among all the foreigners; loved by her own sex, idolized by ours; courted in marriage by more than one noble of the highest rank in France;—who could fail to give her his heart, and drink the sweet poison of her beauty and manners, though he knew it would destroy him? Yet are those manners and that beauty the least of her attractions. It is the mental charm of her conversation, her sense and rectitude, that take and imprison you, so sweetly, that from your prison you do not even wish to get free. In the youth of Bertha

‘ There is a prone and speechless dialect,
Such as moves men;’

but this maturer, though still lovely lady, hath also

‘ Prosperous art,
When she will play with reason and discourse,
And well she can persuade.’

You yourself have felt her persuasive eloquence.”

“ That is not more warmly said than true,” observed I; “ and I now fully understand what it was that shielded your heart from one who so entirely filled mine.”

“ Perhaps,” said he, “ we are not of the same dispositions in these points. You are little used yet to the world yourself, and a retired beauty, like that lovely, secluded flower we talk of, has therefore more charms for you than for one ten years older, and almost *blasé* by his knowledge of artificial life. I love diamonds, you a simple rose. I acknowledge Bertha is the sweetest rose that ever bloomed; but allow on your part, that Honora is the most polished diamond that ever shone.”

“ I cannot stand this poetry,” said I; “ I who am a poor matter-of-fact secretary; but carry it to Lady Hungerford, who is herself full of poetry and genius, and she will accept it; probably reward you for it.”

“ Reward *me*!” exclaimed he. “ Yes; probably as great men used formerly to reward poor poets for dedication, with a few guineas. How little more, in comparison, am I to Lady Hungerford, than one of these poor poets?”

“ Away,” returned I, “ with this humility. You are nobly born as well as herself.”

“ Yes! and a younger brother.”

“ Ride well!”

“ And can scarce afford a horse.”

“Dance well!”

“And thirty-one and a half years old.”

“What then?”

“I have heard her say no man should dance after thirty, or woman after four-and-twenty.”

“The *girls* of twenty-five must be much obliged to her,” said I. “Of course she never dances herself?”

“Never in England. But in France, Terpsichore herself not more graceful.”

“More of Parnassus still!”

“How can it be helped, when she is herself a Muse?”

In such conversation as this, Granville sometimes beguiled an hour with me; and seeing that it gave him a sort of melancholy pleasure, I never repressed it, any more than the castles of hope which he sometimes built, when he thought his mistress distinguished him from other men, or Lord Castleton, who was his political patron, flattered him with the expectation of an embassy, which had been for some time designed for him.

It may be supposed that the interest I felt for Granville made me take every opportunity that offered, to penetrate, if I could, Lady Hungerford's sentiments concerning him; but except great suavity in talking *of*, and a rallying tone in talking *to* him, I could observe nothing particular.

Meantime, I made use freely of his experience, in training me on to the knowledge I so much wanted of the men and manners in which I was now to be daily conversant. For though I certainly, as I said, progressed even out of doors, and, in the closet, had the delight of finding I gave more and more satisfaction to Lord Castleton, yet there hourly sprang up things, situations, and characters, which wanted more elucidation than my hitherto secluded life enabled me to unravel.

I have mentioned, in the case of the Lord Petronius, which I had by Granville's assistance pretty well made out, how it was possible, in this country, for a mere inefficient voluptuary, by dint of connexions and a fashionable reputation, to be placed in the rank of a minister. But there was also another object of my study in another peer, in whom two most inconsistent qualities seemed so blended, that, to me, he was an absolute riddle.

The first time I saw this nobleman was at one of the evening parties at Lord Castleton's, where were many grandees, foreign ministers, and ladies of the court. Nothing could exceed his lofty demeanour. Scarcely did he vouchsafe a word even to an ambassador, nor more than a slight drop of his chin to ladies of the highest rank. To one of the royal dukes alone did he seem to unbend and listen with complacency.

He was majestic in person, rich in his apparel, and, in truth, became his garter well.

As he had vouchsafed a conversation of at least five minutes to Lady Hungerford, the only person in the room, except his royal highness, who had detained him so long, I ventured, when he left her, to ask who he was,

“The Duke of Glenmore,” whispered she, “the proudest man in England, but also the greatest politician and party man. From your situation, Lord Castleton will no doubt present you to him.”

Lord Castleton, who had just joined her, said laughingly, “I am not sure if I dare, unless he hold out a signal for it himself, which, when Mr. Clifford has got a little deeper into party, he probably will. To-night I see is one of his proud nights, so perhaps we had better defer the attempt.”

All this appeared to me a mystery, which I did not know how to expound, especially when I afterwards saw the duke, with an air of eagerness totally the reverse of what he had hitherto shewn, take the arm of a person, by no means one of the distinguished, but with something even vulgar in his appearance. Leading him into a recess of an inner room, he commenced a conversation with him in which he seemed much interested, and which lasted full ten minutes.

Lady Hungerford saw this as well as I, and laughingly said, “Mr. Hoskyns is a lucky man; that is more than one of us poor ladies could get from his grace in a whole week.”

I asked what it could mean, when she referred me to Granville, who had just joined us.

“Ask this gentleman,” said she, playfully, “who certainly understands men, though he says he cannot make out women. But if he can make out the duke, he will, indeed, be a great Apollo.”

She said this as the duke passed out of the room to his carriage, which was called, and we heard him saying to his satellite (for such he seemed), “Hoskyns, I am going to White’s, and will drop you by the way;” upon which they both disappeared.

“I think,” said Granville, addressing Lady Hungerford, “I can answer the call you make upon me without any great boast of an insight into the characters of men, though, as you truly hint, my penetration in regard to women may be questionable.”

“I am glad you at least see your errors,” returned the lady, with some quickness, “after your rudeness this morning. By the way, I had forgot I had resolved not to speak to you.”

Granville bowed, and with an air of melancholy, though also of gallantry, replied:

“May you ever forget such cruel resolves. I was almost afraid of venturing here to-night, in the fear that you would execute them,

and I shall ever feel obliged to the duke for having occasioned this forgetfulness."

"Well," replied she, "as I have been surprised into it, I may as well forgive you, but only provided you retract."

"For such an object I certainly will," answered Granville, "*all but the last line.*"

"Very prettily said," observed the lady; and I thought her colour heightened as she smiled; and she smiled beautifully.

Meantime I was *in nubibus*, and could only see there was something particular between them, which, thinking I had no business with, I walked to another part of the room, where the *belle* of the season, a Miss Falconer, with the mien of a sultana, and eyes like basilisks, outshining the many diamonds that adorned her, had, as usual, gathered a large portion of the company to gaze, criticize, and admire her.

"I hope you are one of the adorers," said Lady Hungerford, when I rejoined her. "Here is Mr. Granville will not stir a step towards her, I suppose knowing and fearing the danger, like a discreet man as he is."

"There may be mettle more attractive," observed Granville, looking with great feeling at Lady Hungerford, "which may better account for it; for, as for discretion, I wish I was what you have been so good as to call me. I fear I am too fond of the *last line* to deserve it."

Puzzled again with this sort of watchword, I no more joined in the conversation, which, however, Granville explained, and enlightened me as to the duke, in a conference I had with him the next day. For walking by White's in my way to Whitehall, I saw the Duke of Glenmore installed at the window amid a throng of aristocrats, and seemingly much in his element. Of a sudden, Hoskyns, and a man apparently still more ordinary than himself (both in looks and manners), passed by, and the duke instantly darted after them into the street, abandoning all his fine friends to engage in an eager conversation with them, which lasted long after they had got into the park, whither I had followed them, in my way to the office.

In the morning papers I had read that the duke had the day before given a grand political dinner, over which he presided "with his usual grace and popularity," and at which, among many lords and gentlemen, were Mr. Hoskyns, M.P., and Mr. Gubbins, M.P. Mr. Gubbins, I afterwards found, was this other companion whom the duke had joined, and seemed most familiar with them both.

I own I wished much to make out this riddle; but Granville, whom I found waiting for me at the office, solved it a few minutes afterwards. Upon my observing that I wondered the duke could be

reckoned proud when he seemed so familiar with such ordinary persons as I had just seen him with, and that the papers even talked of his popularity—

“Yes ; he is popular,” said Granville, “but then it is in his own way, for he is proud as Lucifer at the same time.”

“Can that be?” asked I.

“In appearance, not,” said he, “and yet compatible ; for it depends upon what is the character of the popularity, and what of the pride. For example, his popularity is all of a public, his pride of a private, nature. He will attend all public meetings, and be very condescending with his party and followers, will even flatter them in speeches, and give them dinners. The duke’s fort indeed is the management of a party, and his highest ambition parliamentary influence ; for which purpose he would rather be the arbiter of an election than of the fate of Europe. His dinners, therefore (of one of which you saw the account), *are* all party dinners, got up for the occasion ; sometimes at the Clarendon ; not in his house : or if there, no one can penetrate from the dining-room into the interior. Even the leaders among his supporters know him not in domestic life, unless they are of his own class. He has his room of business, but all his other rooms are closed even to the men ; but as to their wives and daughters, did anybody ever know the duchess open her saloon to them, or notice them anywhere but at the saturnalia of an election ball ? Though they even happen to be of a class to go to court, if not of the initiated, to speak to them would be horror ; to look at them, loss of caste. With all his smiles, in this the duke is as impenetrable as his wife ; who, with her daughters, in regard to his most zealous friends (except, as I say, they are of his own rank), is as closely sealed to them as if in a harem.”

“He pays, then, it should seem,” said I, “a high price for his popularity?”

“Every man pays for an expensive hobby,” returned Granville, “and this is his. I have seen him, like Bolingbroke, on his horse—

‘Who his aspiring rider seemed to know—’

riding with a knot of political club-men in the park, and seemingly hail-fellow-well-met with them all. Perhaps that very night he met some of them at the Opera, and avoided them, or was suddenly struck blind, for fear of being forced to recognise them.”

“How ridiculous,” cried I, with a laugh, “and how contemptible ; I would rather dig in my garden, and live upon potatoes.”

I own all this astonished me, though I began to remember what the sagacious Fothergill had told me to the same effect, and it soon grew too familiar a custom among what are called public men ever to be noticed again.

Indeed, one of the first things I remarked in this world of fashion and politics, so new to me, was, that it by no means followed from the closest intimacies, nay apparent attachments, between leaders and subalterns, that there should be the smallest approach to even acquaintance between their families. Going once with Lord Castleton to dine with Lord Tancred, at his villa, where we found some young ladies had just arrived before us—

“You have company?” said Lord Castleton, to one of the daughters of the house.

“No;” said the young lady, “no company, only two or three of those old people that my father thinks it right to invite now and then, because their father and he are so connected in business.”

But even in this, be it observed, Lord Tancred stood alone, and was quizzed for it, to which he good-naturedly submitted.

After this discussion, Granville and myself fell upon other matters, and being not a little interested to understand the mysterious allusions between him and Lady Hungerford the evening before, he readily explained, nay seemed to wish to do so, in order to ask my opinion.

It seems that in the morning visit which he paid to Berkeley Square, he found the lady alone, except that she was occupied with Pope and his characters of women, which immediately and naturally produced a discussion of the subject. She appeared very indignant with the poet, whom she accused of a total ignorance of the sex, knowing nothing about them, she said, but what Patty Blount and Lady Mary Wortley Montague (neither of them the best authority) chose to tell him.

“As if,” said Lady Hungerford, “there ever was such a character as Chloe, of whom he inconsistently says,

‘With every pleasing, every prudent part,
Say what can Chloe want—she wants a heart.’”

“I, to try her,” said Granville, “observed I thought it the commonest feature in the character of the sex—adding, it was lucky for us—for, if she had a heart, woman would be so irresistible, that no man could ever be his own master, but must crouch at her feet, and be beaten like a spaniel.”

“Which you are too proud to do,” observed the lady.

“‘Not so,’ replied I; ‘for if I really met with a heart which could respond to mine—could a woman really feel any love but the two sorts which Pope says absorb her,

“The love of pleasure or the love of sway,”

no votary could feel so resigned or devoted to heaven’s will, as I to the heaven of her affection.’”

“ ‘Very fine,’ observed Lady Hungerford (as I thought with a distant air); ‘but, according to you, then, this capable heart of yours never met with one that was worthy of it.’

“ ‘Rather,’ replied I, ‘I have always been too little gifted to inspire the feeling, without which I could never love; especially among beings whom the poet describes as so changeable, that they “have no characters at all.” This he does, you know, upon the best authority—the cleverest of her sex—Lady Mary herself. Nay, it is to this inconstancy that the satirical rogue ascribes half their powers :—

“ Ladies like variegated tulips shew,

’Tis to their changes half their charms we owe.”

“ ‘I should be sorry,’ said Lady Hungerford, still more gravely, ‘if this were your real opinion. I would never open my doors to you to insult me again; but I know it is not, and I should like, therefore, to know what it really is.’

“ ‘Really, honestly, and frankly?’ asked I.

“ ‘Yes.’

“ ‘And you will promise not to be offended?’

“ ‘*C’est selon*,’ answered she, and I thought she grew more particular still.

“ ‘Why then,’ said I, ‘take it from an apostrophe of Ségur, who at least was sufficiently interested about these “Cynthias of a minute.”’

“ ‘Positively,’ cried the lady, ‘I will not admit of French authority. I deny that Ségur, any more than Pope, knew any thing really about us.’

“ ‘Is this nothing,’ asked I, ‘or is it the truth?’ and I repeated with animation, I believe, for I felt unusually bold :—‘*Assemblage incompréhensible de vertus et de vices, de bonnes qualités et de défauts, de courage et de faiblesse; mais possédant au plus haut degré l’art de tout embellir.*’

“ ‘Tolerably fair, that last,’ observed the lady, seeing that I paused, ‘but I suppose something terrible is coming.’

“ ‘I went on :—‘*Qui dit vous connaître est un sot.*’

“ ‘Bad.’

“ ‘*Qui vous croit est une dupe.*’

“ ‘Worse.’

“ ‘*Qui se livre à vous——*’

“ ‘Shocking! exclaimed my lady, half offended; ‘you need not go on; I would rather not hear any more abuse.’

“ ‘Abuse! cried I; ‘hear me out :—*Qui se livre à vous est heureux.*’

“ ‘Believe me,’ continued Granville, ‘when I had finished, all

my boldness forsook me. I thought I had gone too far. I could scarcely look at Lady Hungerford to ascertain, if I could, how she took this critical quotation ; and, in fact, having said (I thought rather coldly) that the *last line* endeavoured to compensate for the rest, she changed the subject, to which I did not dare return."

"This, then, is the 'last line,'" said I, "which she last night allowed you to retain?"

"I suppose so."

"Good ; but did nothing else pass?"

"Very little ; merely a common-place, such as—'I suppose you will be at Lord Castleton's to-night?' and I took my departure, leaving her, I thought, more grave and distant towards me than ever I remember."

"I am not so experienced as you," observed I, "but I should not augur ill from this gravity ; it at least shews there is not indifference, which is the next step to emotion ; and emotion once created, may turn to love, as well as to hatred ; while a leaden indifference is always fatal."

Granville stared, and at last exclaimed, "Admirably settled ! But where the devil did you get this knowledge ? Not at Queen's ; not from Fothergill, I am certain ; nor from the Oxford damsels, I'll answer for it. Yet these are all the sources you had upon such subjects when I left you. But I forgot. Lady Hungerford herself has taken you under her guidance, and perhaps has instructed you in more secrets than that of the *parfaitement bonne compagnie*."

I thought my friend had here raised in himself some little hope that I had made out something in his favour from his mistress, so I undeceived him ; but it produced in myself the bold desire to do so if I could, or at least, if possible, to sound her, though at a distance, on his account ; and the constant access which this gracious lady still allowed me to her presence, I thought might afford an opportunity for it.

I say *still* allowed me, because, though, as my instructress in the ways of the *beau monde*, she was pleased to say that I now wanted very little tuition, I own I was so happy at school that I by no means wished for holidays, or to take my degree ; and, what with Lord Castleton's good opinion of me, what with her own good-nature, and what, perhaps, was something, our constant talk, more or less, of Granville, in our meetings, she by no means rescinded the liberty she had allowed me of waiting upon her.

At these visits, as I have said, Granville was always more or less mentioned, and she would often talk of the firmness of his mind.

Pity it was, she one day said, that he was not his elder brother, and then, though perhaps a little too old, he would be a charming match for his pretty cousin, her darling Bertha.

At these words I grew embarrassed, particularly as she looked at me so archly, and as I thought, so searchingly, that I could not help thinking, though with no very precise idea of her intention, that she had some inkling of the devotion I had formerly shewn, and wished to discover whether, and how *far*, it continued.

Ladies, whatever their rank, and with all their superiorities of talent and genius, which make them seemingly above all commonplace feelings, are yet always women where a love tale is concerned; and Lady Hungerford could not have been in the same house with the loquacious Mrs. Margaret without hearing something of the adventure with the poachers, and the consequent unfortunate delirium.

I parried her speech as well as I could; and having been now, for some time, allowed all the ease of a friend, I resolved to pursue the subject of Granville, by saying, that I thought I could be certain that such a match as she had alluded to would never take place.

“How?” said Lady Hungerford, rather hurriedly; “you speak as from authority. Do you know? Have you heard of any engagement? Do you think Miss Hastings has placed her affections elsewhere?”

“No;” returned I, “but *he* has.”

This was pretty bold; perhaps indiscreet in regard to Granville; yet it was for his sake I said it, for I wanted to discover whether it would produce any, and what effect upon this high-bred, but still unsophisticated lady.

Practised as she was, and firm in the government of her countenance, a transient gleam came over her features, and it was not without an indication of, at least, curiosity, that she asked me the ground of my opinion.

“As a friend, much interested that he should be happy,” said she, “I wish to know.”

She said this so naturally, that I was rather baffled, though I thought I would still go on with my experiment, particularly when she farther asked whether he had been captivated at home or abroad.

“Oh!” said I, “both;” but, roguishly looking at her, I added, “I believe chiefly at Paris.”

Here she was certainly off her guard, for she absolutely coloured, and observed—

“I must not ask you to reveal secrets, but I think I know the lady—the Countess Montalembert?”

“No;” said I, with a boldness that astonished myself, “it was a viscountess.”

Whether I looked so significantly on saying this, that she dis-

covered what I meant, I know not, but with an almost affectation of gaiety (certainly a gaiety not natural to her), she immediately said,

“Well, well, I don’t wish to know; and here we have been both doing wrong; I, in prying into secrets I have no right to; *you*, in betraying, if indeed you know them. I am afraid you are a very false man, Mr. De Clifford, and I shall tell your friend not to trust you. I am sorry, however, that poor Bertha has so little chance. I suppose you will, as in friendship bound, inform her of it.”

If I had at all discomposed Lady Hungerford, she now had her revenge; for, seriously hurt by this allusion to a friendship so long at an end, and feeling bitterly that I was banished for ever from the confidence I was supposed to enjoy, I faltered rather than said,

“Indeed, madam, though your supposition does me honour, it is one I cannot pretend to. I have not even seen Miss Hastings these two years; and but for your kind communication I should never have dreamt I was remembered, having so little right to it, by any of the family.”

My lip quivered as I said this; all my courage, which had led me to be almost impertinent, was annihilated, and my experiment on Lady Hungerford reverberated on my own head.

Her real good-nature now came to my assistance, and she said, with the kind consideration which belonged to her,

“Nay Mr. De Clifford, this must not be; I cannot permit your humility, unaffected as I really believe it is, to make you suppose, what it is even ungrateful in you to imagine—that your early friends are so capricious or so unjust. Mr. Hastings himself, any more than his dear daughter, is not a person to throw away his opinions—favourable to-day, lost to-morrow. I told you the first moment I saw you, that they remembered you with interest, and the letters I have received from Bertha, since I informed her of our acquaintance, and your position with Lord Castleton, to say nothing of your progress, would convince you that neither she nor her father are such changeable beings as you fancy them.”

I felt myself agitated to a still greater degree by this account, and knew not how to look, when this kind, as well as accomplished lady, thought it right to endeavour to put me more at my ease, by telling me the extent of what she knew.

“Come,” said she, “I see you are under constraint from doubts, and perhaps fears, of what I do or do not know. I will tell you, therefore, frankly, that I know all the night adventure with the poachers, and all that passed in the delirium occasioned by your consequent illness. I know, too, all your expressed opinions of

the possibility of loving without hope, and am in possession of your pretty verses on that subject. What is more, I know all that in your agitation escaped you in your last interview with Bertha, which that feeling and just-minded girl told me, with tears in her eyes.

“Tears!” cried I, in greater agitation than ever. “Tears! in such an angel, from such a cause!”

“Yes,” said Lady Hungerford, “for the tears of benevolence (and your emotion obliges me to tell you they were no more) will easily be made to flow from a good, and particularly a youthful heart. Now do not let this plunge you into the dreadful mistake of supposing that this feeling of Miss Hastings proceeded from any thing but what I have called it, *benevolence*. Nor, did I think you like the common run of young men, a coxcomb, would I tell you this, or more than this—that the tone of your last interview with her convinced her that a delirium may often indicate foregone conclusions, and though apparent madness, may be real truth.”

“And hence, no doubt,” said I, rather stiffly, “that a love which I had not been able to conceal, and which it would be folly to attempt to disguise from a penetration like your ladyship’s, was the cause of all that change of behaviour which I felt so cruelly at the time, and the bitterness of which has continued in memory ever since.”

I thought Lady Hungerford was a little affected at this; but seeing the necessity for the most clear understanding on my part of what she meant, and meant not, to convey, she assumed a grave and impressive air, and with something like solemnity said,

“I trust you are too just, and too little egotistical, to misconstrue what I said into more than what I really meant—a desire to correct an error under which you seemed to be labouring—that mine and your friends had in the least changed towards you. Having never been more than a *friend*—it being impossible, even if you were Lord De Clifford himself, that she *could* be more—Bertha is so still: and when I described her keen regrets, I may say her sorrow, at perceiving you labouring under a most unavailing passion, which might end in your misery, I meant any thing but to encourage you to think she could ever entertain it. Believe me, who possess all her confidence, this is wholly out of the question, were you even a prince of the blood.”

This, as I thought unnecessary addition, made me shudder, and I replied (moodily, and I fear proudly),

“Your ladyship need be under no such apprehension. I perfectly well know the distance between Miss Hastings and myself; nor was it necessary to remind me of it: for, of the total absence

on her part of any thing like encouragement I have even been too well convinced, to think that this distance can be overleapt."

"Honourably said, most distant Sir, and most lofty-minded gentleman," replied my fair instructress; "and, this being so, I feel perfectly safe in having made you this confidence. Do me the justice, however, to believe, that it is for your own sake I have spoken, and therefore, if I tell you that the bar against you is insuperable, you ought to thank me. In return, I hope I need not tell you that your secret with me is safe; though, indeed, no man need be ashamed of loving such a creature as Bertha. Time and absence, however, and still more, perhaps, the usual remedy of very young men—admiration of another—may do much for you. For the latter, at least, there is abundant scope, at this brilliant time of the year."

"By the way," added she, "I saw you rather occupied last night with that very brilliant person, Miss Falconer, who, though this is only her first season, has already turned the heads of half the town. She has as much fortune, they say, as beauty; and her *tournure*, you see, is perfect. Now, suppose you try a little experiment upon yourself, and see whether this superb sultana (a very contrast to Miss Hastings) may not cause some diversion in your feelings."

Though she said this sportingly, and, as she afterwards allowed, to see whether I *could* be diverted or not, I did not like Lady Hungerford for this, and said perhaps somewhat resentfully,

"Your ladyship does well to laugh at my very impertinent feelings, and has indeed said well, that these two ladies are a contrast to one another. Oh, how great a one!"

"Be it so," returned Lady Hungerford; and (again to try me) she observed that Miss Falconer, in the opinion of all judges, from her singularly fine manners, taste, and elegance, would, she thought, be preferred by everybody, to a girl brought up in the country, however highly allied.

"That may be, madam," said I; "but an illustration from your favourite science of music shall be my answer. A simple but touching and pathetic melody, which thrills the heart, and perhaps fills the eyes with tears, may *for a time* be eclipsed by an elaborate, magnificent sinfonia, full of imposing and learned accompaniments; and so a beautiful girl, decked only in the simple charms of a sweet nature, may seem veiled for a time, when a court comes sweeping by, in all the pomp of majesty and gold. But as the charm of the melody returns upon the sense, and is cherished long after the scientific and imposing sinfonia is forgotten; so the beautiful daughter of nature, I have supposed, renews and maintains her place in the heart long after all the finery of the court has ceased to be remembered."

“Upon my word, fair Sir,” said Lady Hungerford, “there might be a worse exposition, and I could pardon much imprudence to so much elegance of fancy as well as constancy. Nor am I sorry to have sounded you by what I said of a diversion, since it lets me into the truth of what your friend Mr. Granville believed was once a ruling passion, but he thought it had subsided. I grieve to think his opinion was not well founded. But there must be an end to imprudence, when it swells into madness; and though I dare say you will hate me for telling you so, it is absolute madness to foster this affection. The bar I have told you is insuperable—were you as rich as you are well born, you could not succeed—the passion *must* be conquered.”

“Be assured, madam,” replied I, somewhat moved, “it would not be easy for me to hate you for any thing, much less for what, I trust I am not too presumptuous in thinking proceeds from good will towards me, however unworthy of it.”

“Nay,” returned my protectress (for I cannot help calling her so), “do not disqualify yourself, but rather turn your qualifications to account. Mr. Granville informed me he had once told you there was more than one Miss Hastings in the world; and, much as I love and admire her, I agree with him. I will not recur again to a *diversion* to which you are properly superior, and to which I only adverted as a trial, for which I ought to ask pardon. But there are other objects, not less intense, more prudent, and even more honourable in your position; I mean the pursuit of your ambition, so well begun, and the study of the world in which you may be hereafter conspicuous. These the indulgence of this secret passion may cruelly thwart. How many thousands of young men would give their little fingers to be where you are, at the expense, easy to them, of eradicating even a stronger attachment than this!”

“Stronger! madam!” exclaimed I. “I am sorry you think so meanly of me.”

And seizing my hat, and with a deep sigh, I took my leave so suddenly and unceremoniously that I found myself in the street before Lady Hungerford could offer any thing in reply. And so ended an experiment conceived and made to promote the happiness of another, but which lamentably conduced to the deterioration of my own.

CHAPTER XII.

IN ORDER TO RECOVER FROM MY RUINOUS ATTACHMENT I THROW MYSELF MORE AND MORE UPON THE TOWN, IN THE REVIEW OF ITS DIFFERENT CHARACTERS.—A DINNER AT LORD CASTLETON'S, WHERE I MEET A GREAT CRITIC.—CHARACTER OF MR. JOHN PARAGRAPH.

What foolish master taught you these manners, Sir John?

SHAKSPEARE. —2 *Henry IV.*

THE interview with Lady Hungerford, recorded in the last chapter, did me no good, and I felt rightly served for endeavouring to discover a lady's secret, when I had one of my own which I wished to conceal, if possible, from myself; for, from the thousand scenes of another sort in which I was now engaged, I had begun to hope that I was really independent of that absorbing feeling which had tinged all my early years, with some pleasure indeed, but more pain.

'Tis true I was affected and pleased with the thought that I was so kindly remembered as Lady Hungerford described; but the very non-concealment of that kindness, with no intimation of any thing more, proved that I was nothing to Bertha. Had there been any thing warmer, she would not have so frankly confessed her *friendship*; she would have been afraid of herself. This I felt, from I know not what sort of intuition: so far had I advanced without instruction in the knowledge of the heart.

I am ashamed to say how wayward I felt towards Lady Hungerford after this last visit. Though I could not by any means make it out, I wished to think myself unkindly used, and abstained from repeating my calls for a week; nay, I excused myself from one of her *soirées*; and when I met her unexpectedly at a third place, and rather looked to be reproached for it, to my mortification I was treated exactly with the same affability and ease as if I had shewn my usual assiduities.

I was half angry at this no change, and, like Sir Peter in the play, said to myself, "She may break my heart, but she sha'nt keep her temper."

Meantime, I thought the experiment I had made in regard to her feeling for Granville had succeeded; and that the strong hint I had given her of his devotion had far from displeased her. It is certain she did any thing but keep her resolution of not speaking to him

again ; the “last line” seemed always the last thing remembered, and was remembered with pleasure.

The effect was visible upon himself. All his agreeable qualities—his talent—his tact, and good breeding shone out in double lustre, and he wanted nothing but his embassy to enable him to undertake a siege in form.

I confess I envied him ; and in the midst of business, pleasure, and dissipation, I became, as formerly, solitary and sad ; though not, as formerly, fond of my chain, for I really wished to break it. My friends thought me like Richard, when about to fight for his kingdom, and noticed that

“ I had not that alacrity of spirit,
And cheer of mind, that I was wont to have.”

And yet there was nothing in Lady Hungerford’s caution or communication, that ought to have added to whatever uneasiness I had before undergone. It was not new to me, that I was to have no hope for Bertha. I had, indeed, thought I had settled that matter for ever, and had even been light of heart when I first came to London.

Nor did the associations thrown around Lady Hungerford at all sadden my recollections, or prevent my delight in her conversation. It was the intimation she gave that I was still so kindly remembered where it did me good to think myself forgotten, that disturbed me. For by reviving tenderness (never indeed entirely suppressed), it excited a tumult once more in my feelings, by no means soothed by the accompanying assurance that those feelings were vain.

I tried again to summon my pride to aid me against both Bertha and her friend who had so lectured me. I did not understand, much less like, the positive tone assumed, as it were expressly, by Lady Hungerford on this occasion. In particular, I could not make out, and was disposed to resent, the seemingly *gratuitous* assumption, that were I Lord De Clifford himself, or even a prince of the blood, I should not succeed. What right had Lady Hungerford to assert this ? *Why* assert it, except unnecessarily to humble me ?

I became downright angry. But I could not keep my anger long, for my admiration of this charming person predominated over even a sense of injury ; and as for Bertha, all pride fell before her, and I felt that to her I was “pigeon-livered and lacked gall.”

Luckily, at this time, a press of business in the state, and a press of engagements in the world of fashion, came so far to my aid, that I had little time to brood. Lord Castleton gave me employment enough in the former, and the latter was greatly encouraged, on a

good natural principle, as she told me herself, by Lady Hungerford. I became what is called *bien répandu*. I wrote all the morning, or saw courtiers and applicants, and made precis for the king, which he was pleased to approve, as he told Lord Castleton himself, of which, being one of the best judges in his own dominions, I was not a little proud.

In the afternoon I rode in the park, amid a gay and increasing throng of acquaintance of both sexes; many of them rising young men, some actually risen; and the women of the most finished *tournure*.

In these parties Lady Hungerford and Granville, who constantly attended her, were conspicuous, and by the consequence which their protection gave me, made me appear in the world any thing but a decayed gentleman.

As to themselves, the thing seemed decided in public opinion, and they were given without reserve to each other. I was much catechised upon it; and though I could not answer, because I knew nothing, it was taken as a proof of discretion, auguring a prudence which would in the end assuredly lead to something great.

The opportunities of knowing the world were thus multiplied, and what amused me was, to observe the deference shewn me by many whom I thought great men at Oxford, because of their horses and large expenditure compared with my own (though perhaps the whole of their fortune), but who in those days stood studiously aloof from such little men as I.

These men formed a class which an observer of the world would do well to note. They were the Mr. Wiggenses and Mr. Sprigginses of life; sons of little merchants, or practitioners in the professions, who had bred or intended to breed them to their own vocations; but leaving them small fortunes, from three to five thousand pounds apiece, which sufficing to their immediate views, they would not submit to either the restraint or what they thought the disgrace of business, but resolved to burst forth men of fashion at once.

This, as they imagined, consisted in being able to keep a good horse, with perhaps (for it was not universal), a groom; to ride regularly in the ring, know every coach with a coronet, be a Bond Street loungeur (then a great town character), and lodge in its neighbourhood. The richer ones frequented the coffee-houses there, and sometimes even dined at them. These were at all proper times to be seen at Tattersall's, and never missed Epsom.

But the happiness and dignity of these gentry were consummate, if they could regularly attend the Opera of a Saturday night, where one of them was a most amusing study—indeed perfectly unique; for, having a few acquaintances of his own of the higher sort, and,

by dint of an apprenticeship to it of some years, having acquired a knowledge of the names and persons of most of the people of rank, he was to be seen and heard regularly echoing the announcement of every carriage as it was called, generally accompanying it with some remark regarding the motions of the owners. Thus, if Lady D.'s carriage was vociferated, he would loudly repeat it, with the addition of "stops the way;" if Lady E.'s, he would cry out, "gone some time;" if Lord F.'s, "gone to Brooks's with Lord G.;" if Lady H.'s, "has not been here to-night."

Townsend (then a young minister of police) complained bitterly of this person, for rivalling him, as he said, in his vocation; and once said, with his characteristic liberty of speech, meaning really to compliment him, "What an excellent police officer was spoilt, Sir, when you were made a gentleman." The laugh occasioned by this innuendo kept away the aspirant of fashion two whole nights.

What became of this useless order of beings, as they grew older, I never could exactly make out. It is certain most of them disappeared, though some continued to be seen lounging on "the shady side of Pall Mall" in summer, or expelling smoke from their cigars in winter; neither advancing nor retrograding; the only alteration being from youth to age.

Now and then one of them might contrive to make a comfortable marriage, and take his place among his sister dowagers at the card-table; but most passed their lives in useless, monotonous, and irrespectable celibacy: not put to shame by any notorious vice, but total strangers to any active virtue.

Those whose annuities were of a smaller kind altogether disappeared, and were scattered about the world, glad to escape into the colonies, or, if they had interest, into some public office, where I have sometimes detected them, rather to their dismay. But again, "*Vogue la galère.*"

I could write a volume on the different characters I met with; some at the clubs, and some at the tables of the great, particularly at Lord Castleton's, where, as his *aide-de-camp* (the title he gave me), I had my regular place. The parties were, as may be supposed, chiefly political; but they admitted, from the taste and character of the host, of a mixture of rank and conditions, from the *élite* of the *haute noblesse*, to the untitled, but talented man of genius, in letters, or the liberal arts. The conversation, therefore, was often rich and interesting, and generally agreeable; nor, with such a field for it, did I forget Lady Hungerford's advice, to endeavour to banish what it was madness to think of, in the pictures of life thus presented to me.

At one of these dinners, composed of company such as I have described, I was greatly amused, and edified too, by meeting a new

sort of character, of whose very existence I had hitherto been ignorant. Granville, who was in general, from his knowledge of the wits, men of letters, and critics of the time, entrusted by Lord Castleton with the task of selecting his guests of this description, had brought this person to the party, to all of whom (at least, those of a higher degree) he seemed a perfect stranger.

Yet everybody had heard of the eminent critic, Mr. John Paragraph ; although nobody knew what he had been until he blazed forth as one of the directors of the public taste, which he condescended to guide in a periodical publication. Perhaps he had been, like myself, a decayed gentleman ; though, unlike myself, he had been ten years on the town. Hence, on the strength of a considerable portion of verjuice in his composition, and impenetrable impudence in scattering it, whether in print or conversation, he became a first-rate character in the walk he had chosen.

Mr. Paragraph was eminent for a natural slang, which passed, with vulgar people, for wit, and with the weak and timid, for overpowering ability. “ Yet I have long,” said Granville, who gave me this account, “ taken measure of his understanding and acquirements, and even as what he pretends to be, a critic, have found him below mediocrity ; but, as man who has either the mind, manners, or literature of a gentleman, he is not to be named. For the fellow has not a feeling of liberality in his whole carcase ; not a sentiment of poetry, a spark of imagination, or the commonest knowledge of history, still less of the nature of man. Yet, having bought a press, he sets up for a critic of all work—poetical, political, historical, and ethical. He is a cormorant for praise from his miserable hacks, whom he governs with a rod of iron ; and, what is more, he makes money by selling his praises to the weak and vain—the would-be authors and orators.” If among these there are some above purchasing his puffs, he is able sometimes to force them to buy off his abuse, which they are fools enough not to see rather does them good than harm.”

“ How comes it, however,” said I, “ that you produce such a man ? for I hear you have invited him to dine with Lord Castleton.”

“ Why, he is one of those persons, who, being free from all burthen of modesty, and revelling in their intrepidity of assurance, are so far of use, in company, that they will not let people go to sleep. I have, therefore, prevailed upon Lord Castleton, who has heard of, but never yet saw him, to let me invite him, if only to shew the sort of animal he is. You may be sure the invitation was accepted, for he is a great tuft-hunter, as well as a great feeder. A turtle would entice him anywhere, and for a plate of it he would even sell a commendation of the worst book that ever was written. But turtle from a lord, and that lord a minister, will elevate him to the third heaven ;

for it is certain that his good things, if he have any, depend upon the good things on the table, and the flow of his wit upon the flow of the claret. In short, in these respects, he is an illustration of the description which Johnson gives of a third or fourth rate critic, who finds he can boil his weekly pot better by abuse than by praise."

Granville added, moreover, that Paragraph was a most despotic monarch in his way, and a bully among all minor publishers and authors.

"In short," said he, "it is not easy to say whether vanity, avarice, or impudence, are uppermost in his character."

Such was the redoubtable Mr. Paragraph, whom my friend had persuaded Lord Castleton to invite to his dinner, with a view to shew him and his company what they had often heard of, but perhaps not seen—one of the self-elected rulers of public opinion.

This account of Mr. Paragraph raised both my curiosity and fear. I, however, allayed the last by resolving not to encounter him, but only to listen.

During the first course, everybody was so intent upon the business for which they had assembled, that they gave one another little opportunity for conversation; and I could see nothing in this terrific person but a coarse *gourmand* (such as Granville had described him), in his practical demonstration of the excellence of the turbot and turtle. Upon this he complimented my lord, as indeed he did upon every thing every minute; not forgetting, amid a thousand private merits, the wisdom of his public measures, upon which he actually seemed disposed to pronounce a panegyric in form, for the edification of the company, had not Lord Castleton repressed it with disgust, though equivocally conveyed, by saying, in a tone which might by any one else have been taken for irony, that he never ventured to intrude such common-place business as politics upon men of *genius* and imagination.

This produced a complacent bow from the censor, who took it as a compliment, and after this instance of his tact, allowed the conversation to become general.

I thought, at first, that he felt a little subdued by the class of company in which he now, for the first time, found himself; but was soon undeceived, for he rallied into a sort of collision with Lord Grandison, a nobleman of a certain age, and high breeding, made still more dignified by great gravity of aspect.

This lord was lamenting to Lord Castleton the death, that day, of a common friend of theirs, which he said had occasioned great grief to his nieces, the ladies Devenish.

"Yes," said Paragraph, pertly, though not addressed by Lord Grandison, "and we may be certain their grief, is genuine, for

there is a new opera to-morrow, which they will not be able to attend."

"You, of course, know these ladies?" observed Lord Grandison in a dry tone, and with a look of distant dignity, yet of surprise, which might have repelled a less bold person than the gallant Paragraph.

"Not I," said he, with great affectation of indifference; "only there is a new opera to-morrow, and I thought their grief would therefore be but natural."

"Human nature is very much obliged to you," replied Lord Grandison, with still greater gravity; "but let me advise you, Sir, when next you make an offensive observation among strangers, to be more acquainted with the subject of it than you seem to be here. I have known the Ladies Devenish from their cradles, and I must be allowed to tell you their characters will by no means justify the wit you have thrown away upon them."

This rebuke had so far effect, that the critic felt uneasy, and looked round among the company for protection,—which, not finding, he absolutely seemed disconcerted, and stammered out something like an excuse; which Lord Grandison seeming to accept, by an inclination of his head, the fellow instantly recovered his familiarity, and said, flippantly,

"I trust your lordship will not bear malice, and, in proof of it, will let us take a glass of wine together."

Lord Grandison immediately poured out some wine, and interchanging smiles with Lord Castleton, of indescribable contempt, but which ought to have sunk our censor to the earth, coolly drank off his glass.

A rather awkward pause ensued, and Paragraph was again silent for several minutes, but revived on Granville's mentioning a young author who had just published a poem, but which he was modest enough to say himself he was afraid would not be read.

Paragraph, here feeling in his element, exclaimed, "He may be much more afraid if it is."

"You have read the poem, then?" said Lord Castleton.

"No," cried he, "but I have reviewed it. Ha, ha, ha!"

"What astonishing talents you gentlemen of the press must have," observed Lord Castleton. "Intuition itself is nothing to you. No wonder poor authors and ministers are so kept in order by you."

Paragraph again bowed; but looking round, and finding, by a sort of smile, that the company took the thing differently from himself, he actually shewed symptoms of distress.

As for me, in my simplicity, I wondered at a state of society which could seem to admit such a person to its honours.

Granville told me afterwards he doubted the fact, that he had reviewed a book without reading, or at least looking at it; but though it compromised his integrity, the assertion sounded epigrammatic, and among his literary dependents would have certainly been thought witty.

Paragraph's non-success here delivered us again from him for a few minutes more, and he seemed under some constraint, on the conversation becoming general, and nobody speaking to him; for even Lord Castleton, with all his politeness, had now neglected him. Rallying, however, and addressing Granville, he observed,

"I saw you last night at the great Lady Hungerford's assembly."

"Yes," replied Granville, who seldom spared him, "and I wondered how the devil you got there."

"O!" returned he, "leave me alone for getting any where I like. But, upon my word," added he, in an authoritative tone, "considering Lady Hungerford's reputation, I was sadly disappointed."

"How so?" asked Lord Castleton, with curiosity.

"Why, I own," replied Paragraph, "it was far from the *genteel* thing I expected. The rooms and the music were well enough, but the company, with a few exceptions, were absolute quizzes. There is indeed an article in this morning's *World*¹, wondering whether money was taken at the door for shewing them."

"Written by yourself, no doubt," said Granville.

"That's neither here nor there," answered the director of public taste; looking, however, very conscious.

"You do my niece a great deal of honour," said Lord Castleton, with a bow of ambiguity.

"Your niece, my lord! Good heavens! Lady Hungerford your niece! What a mistake. Upon my soul I did not intend it, indeed could not have known it. I am sure your lordship—that is, I beg pardon; I assure you it shall all be set to rights immediately."

"Not the least harm's done," said Lord Castleton with great composure; "and Lady Hungerford is so benevolent, that if to abuse her and her parties every day will do you or your paper any good, or raise your reputation as the director of public opinion, and above all, of public *taste*, I will answer for it she will give you *carte blanche*; so make yourself easy."

As considerable mirth ensued upon this, Paragraph did not know how to take it; nor whether it emanated from great good-nature, or great contempt. For the first he bowed; from fear of the last, he reddened; and at length, receiving no relief, applied to Granville for help, exclaiming,

¹ Then the most fashionable morning paper.

"My dear Granville, I am sure you will answer for it, that I could not mean the least disrespect to his lordship or Lady Hungerford, only—I really don't know how to apologize—but, God bless my soul, how late it is."

And (the pendule just then striking eleven) he rushed out of the room, his ears regaled all the way through the hall, by the hearty laughs of those he left behind.

"I trust," said Lord Grandison, "the lesson this poor man has received will do him good."

"I doubt it," observed Lord Castleton, "from Granville's account of him; for to Granville we owe the honour he has done us to-day."

"Wait till his next paper comes out," said Granville, "before we pronounce."

The paper did come out, with a long leading article on the miserable state of English society, from the unbearable insolence of the aristocracy, particularly of those in office, and the total want of taste, elegance, and manners, in the ladies who pretend to call themselves women of fashion.

When we broke up, I said to Granville, who took me home,

"How I envy you men of the town your opportunities for knowledge. Here, in my innocence, I have been for years thinking a newspaper critic a sort of a literary god, or at least a sage and profound judge, whom all the world are bound to reverence. Can this be a specimen of them?"

"Certainly not," said Granville; "for you see he is of an inferior class, who make up in impudence what they want in sense, and he shewed himself off accordingly, as an ass in fine trappings. There are, luckily, many totally opposite to him—real scholars, and real gentlemen, whom it is both pleasure and advantage to know, and whose manners are far different from those of this slimy caterpillar, who bedaubs every thing he crawls over. There are, however, too many like him in the lower classes of the press, and to study the character of one of these critics of what we call the shop, would give you both amusement and useful knowledge."

"I have heard something of it from Mr. Manners, and have been shocked with it," returned I. "I should be glad, however, to be instructed in what seems such a mystery."

"Possibly I may help you," said Granville, "by introducing you to an old fellow-gownsmen of mine, with whom I was at Trinity, before I was of All Souls, and who called upon me the other day. His profession has been that of a critic for these last ten years; but I fear he is much the worse for wear. He can, however, tell much of the prison-house if he pleases."

"I should like to know him," said I.

CHAPTER XIII.

I HAVE A DISCOURSE WITH GRANVILLE ON THE SYSTEM OF TRADING CRITICISM.—
 PICTURE OF A DISTRESSED MAN OF LETTERS.

What would'st write of me, if thou should'st praise me?

Oh, gentle lady, do not put me to't, for I am nothing if not critical.

SHAKSPEARE.—*Othello*.

THE next day, eager to solve some of the difficulties as to his craft, occasioned by the meeting with Paragraph, I called upon Granville to renew the subject, and to ask him to introduce me to the friend who, he thought, could so enlighten me. He himself, however, had powers and experience to do so, without aid, as will presently be seen. As to the introduction, he said he was very willing to effect it, if I would make such a journey as to Fleet-street; but that his friend lived in such a hole, he feared I should not like it.

Upon inspecting his address, it proved to be Wine Office Court, Fleet-street.

“Come,” said I, “if the great Johnson did not disdain such a neighbourhood, and if the amiable, elegant Goldsmith lived in Fleet-market itself, do not let us be too nice in visiting a man of merit, only because he is lodged like them.”

It was settled, therefore, that we should proceed to Wine Office Court; but first, by way of proper introduction, Granville said he would tell me something of his friend's history.

His name was Graves. He had been educated and distinguished as a classic at Rugby. His father, a country apothecary, could have well provided for him in his own line, but he would not relinquish Homer for Galen; in short, he hated the shop; so he came to Trinity College with a prodigious quantity of Greek and Latin, and a total ignorance of the world. Here he was treated as a quiz, as he almost deserved, in every thing but books; yet so mild and unoffending was he, that nobody could use him ill, and the tutors and fellows all gave him respect for his scholarship. In particular, one of the fellows, the famous wit, poet, and punster of the University, the Rev. T. W——, took him by the hand; so that, when his father died, which he did just after he had taken his degree, leaving scarcely bread to his mother, and none at all to himself, Mr. W—— interested himself about his provision, and, as the college pro-

spects were closed upon him from not being on the foundation, he advised him, on the strength of his book-knowledge, to seek it in London.

For this purpose, he gave him a recommendation for employment to a very great personage ; indeed, the supposed *sovereign* of literature and criticism of that time, and who, if he had not the talent of his prototype, Smollet, had all his moroseness, and a self-sufficiency almost equal to Smollett's pride. His patron added to this a not inconsiderable loan, which the honest fellow afterwards repaid.

"His reception, or rather non-reception, by Mr. Spleenwort, at that time the king of the critical press, was so remarkable, and will give you," said Granville, "such an insight into the character of some of these *guides of the public taste*, that I cannot do better than relate it, as he related it to me.

"First, agreeably to what he had been told, that Mr. Spleenwort exacted the utmost of the ceremonial between those who seek, and those who distribute employment, Graves thought it most respectful to inclose his letter of introduction in a sort of complimentary note, requesting an interview.

"'Had Spleenwort,' said Graves, 'been first Lord of the Treasury, I could not have been more humble ; or if I had been a porter in his hall, the First Lord would not have been so much the reverse.'

"Graves waited a whole week, under a total silence, when he ventured to remind the great man of his first note, by a second, informing him that he only waited in town to know his pleasure.

"To this, after a few days' more of delay Spleenwort condescended to reply, but not in his own hand ; and the letter," said Granville, "is such a curiosity, that Graves, having made me a present of it, I have looked it out for you."

Here he took it out of a cabinet, and I read as follows :—

"Sir—I am really so oppressed by the numerous applications from literary gentlemen of Oxford and Cambridge, and the Scotch Universities (indeed, from all parts of the world), that it is impossible to say when I can see you, or whether I can see you at all. I am even obliged to make use of my chief clerk's hand to acknowledge Mr. W——'s letter. I have great respect for *that* gentleman's *own* abilities ; but I cannot conceal from you that I have so often been disappointed in the assistants whom he has recommended, that I am forced to be very chary in my selection of them. Most of them, however well intentioned, or versed in book knowledge, have no knowledge of the world, still less of business, and of the *principles* which necessarily govern the directors of the *critical* press they are totally ignorant.

“Mr. W—’s eulogy of you is strong, and I have no doubt you deserve all he has said of your TEMPER, LEARNING, CANDOUR, FAIRNESS, and IMPARTIALITY ; but, to be plain with you, temper, impartiality, learning, and all that, though good in themselves, are not only common among young men, but are not exactly what we most look to, in a widely-circulated periodical like ours. I, therefore, by no means wish you to remain in town, to wait the time when I can see you ; but if you are in the way, and will take the chance of my being at leisure some day next week, I will be glad (*should I be so*) to enter into your qualifications, terms, etc., etc. Meantime, I remain, Sir,

“Yours, etc., etc.,

“SOLOMON SPLEENWORT.”

I was petrified with the insolence of this letter, but particularly with the passage which did not blush to say, that the qualities of temper and impartiality were not exactly those that suited a critic.

“You see he was at least honest,” said Granville.

“Honest in avowing dishonesty,” replied I ; “but can it be, that a critic must, or can, discard these sacred qualities?”

“You are most terribly green,” returned my friend, “if you suppose that many *can* not, or even that they can prosper if they *do* not.”

“Extraordinary!” cried I.

“Not at all,” said Granville. “For as long as slander, or the pulling down of a party, or a great reputation, even at the expense, now and then, of a good fat lie—as long as this will insure more readers than the milk-and-water virtue of being just, so long will this system prevail, and so long will this most puissant Spleenwort take the sale of his strictures as a proof that he is the sovereign power of criticism of the day, and then——”

“What then?”

“He will, like

‘Jove in his chair,
Of the press Lord Mayor,
With his nods,
Men and gods
Keep in awe.’”

“You have described,” said I, “a wonderful animal, of which I had no idea ; and, from your account, he must have many requisites to complete so redoubtable a character. Great learning, of course?”

“The appearance of it will do,” answered Granville, “provided it be disguised under a certain set of phrases, which have been

justly called the cant of criticism, and are grown so mechanical that the lowest dabblers brandish them with dexterity ; provided also the proper self-sufficiency, and contempt for those they attack, are always preserved. If once modesty and candour are allowed to mingle in such a critic as Spleenwort or Paragraph, there is an end of him."

"Learning, then," said I, "according to you, will do little."

"Not without other qualifications, denoting, indeed, very high gifts of mind."

"Will you name those gifts?" said I.

"Some of them," returned he, "are even heroic. For, in the first place, a true critic of the character we are discussing (for I speak only of the dross, not the gold of the class)—he who writes for the shop, with a view to sell his wares—must be able to bluster, and bully, and call names ; and yet be so thick-skinned himself, as to rise superior to a sense of shame, or even of insult, if he meet the same treatment in return. This, you will allow, is great mental courage."

"Great indeed," said I.

"Next, he must be able to abuse the person, birth, and private life of his victim, without caring whether what he says be true or false ; and if its falsehood be demonstrated, he must hold such a liberty as defending a man's self in sovereign contempt ; or if he does not choose to be silent, he must write another paper, and abuse the presumptuous blockhead ten times more than at first. This you will also allow is heroic."

"You paint," said I, "a man without a heart."

"You have hit it exactly," returned Granville ; "a *trading* critic is, and must be, without a heart. But we have forgot poor Graves all this while."

"True," said I, "and I am anxious to know how he succeeded finally with Mr. Spleenwort."

"Why, he had no success at all ; for, under all his meekness and simplicity, his pride would not permit him to dance attendance a single moment longer on Sir Oracle. But the alternative was unfortunate for this neglected son of literature ; for it produced so much distress to his mind, from the affronts he was forced to sustain, and to his body, from its depriving him even of sustenance, that he applied to me to obtain a clerkship in a public office. Yet so modest is his character, and so few his wants, that when not actually without a dinner, he is not unhappy, as long as he can loiter at what he calls his *home*, in his dressing-gown, unbuttoned and ungartered, with his book and his inkstand."

This colloquy over, we proceeded to Wine Office Court, which we entered through a low and dirty passage, and beheld a gloom,

and felt a closeness which formed a lamentable contrast to the light and cheerful airiness of the quarter we had left.

The court was none of the cleanest, and the house we entered, where Mr. Graves was a lodger up two pair of stairs, was certainly not wanting in the *obsoleti sordibus tecti*. The door, a pannel of which was split, was opened by the landlady, whose appearance, however, did not prove that either air or water was absolutely necessary to make a person rubicund and fat.

Upon our asking whether Mr. Graves was at home, "There," said she (pointing up a crazy staircase), "you will find him as high as you can go."

I blessed myself, when I recollected what I had once thought of as a pleasant profession, and how forcibly Manners put it to flight by a picture which here seemed about to be realized.

On ascending to the second story, we knocked at a door, which had certainly once been painted. The answer, "Come in," brought us to the sanctum of our man of letters.

He was, as Granville had described him, in his state of happiness—that is, in a loose dressing-gown, seemingly unacquainted with any laundress, leaning back in an arm-chair, so rickety, that it made us tremble for his safety. His legs were stretched aloft over a table, on which were several books, and also a plate, with the *beaux restes* of some bread and cheese, an empty egg-shell, and as empty a porter pot.

Poor Graves started up dismayed, and full of blushes, at being thus surprised.

"I never thought, or expected, or hoped," said he to Granville, stammering, "that you would take the trouble of coming so far to return my visit, and I only left my address in case you should have occasion to write to me."

Then looking at me inquiringly, I was introduced to him as Lord Castleton's secretary, which brought an evident blush into his cheek, particularly when Granville added, I was his good friend, and he had communicated his views to me.

This, I believe, made the good gentleman (happily for himself, of a sanguine temper) think the thing was done; for he became on the alert, begged us to sit down, and would have offered us chairs if he had had them.

There was indeed a window-seat; but as that also formed a locker for coals, which lay in scattered fragments on the cover, it could not be used. After a little conversation, which, therefore, took place standing, Granville told him that he wondered, with his attainments, that a poor clerkship would content him.

"You will be a mere piece of mechanism," said Granville; "a slave."

“I am both already,” replied Graves, with a sigh; “and my servitude, being of the mind as well as the fingers, is far worse than the same quill-driving would be with the will free. Take the last specimen of what I am.”

At this, opening his table-drawer, he pulled out a letter from the editor of one of the weekly papers who employed him, and which ran thus :—

“Mr. Graves,—I am sorry to say that you have again transgressed the line to which I have confined you. You have praised instead of condemned a work, so highly ministerial, and, what is worse, so able, that, if this goes on, my paper will be ruined. If you choose to set up for yourself, well and good; but in that case, I have no farther occasion for your services.

“I am your humble servant,

“SIMON SOURKROUT.”

“Affronting enough,” said Granville. “But had he then confined you to a particular line, and did you go from your agreement?”

“Quite the contrary,” said Graves; “for I would not be bound, and the consequence was, that as I was paid by the piece for the works he should send, knowing my turn, he seldom sent me any; and you may therefore judge of the insolence of such a note.”

“God keep me from such petty tyrants!” cried Granville; “and you, my friend, from such thralldom. We must try what can be done for you.”

At this we took our leave, and I left him with a melancholy feeling that such things could be, from which I did not recover during all the way back to Granville’s lodgings.

When there, I broke out into a long jeremiad, that such miseries (which till now I had never witnessed) could be allowed to belong to the republic of letters.

“You have miscalled it republic,” said Granville; “at least if a republic mean an assemblage of freemen;—for never was such a set of tyrants as some of these self-installed usurpers; who, if indeed a republic, claim to be the perpetual dictators of it.”

“You describe, however,” said I, “persons of very superior powers, and who, I suppose, are unrivalled for taste, and irresistible in their judgments; acquainted with all ancient and modern lore; versed in all sciences, and all arts.”

“The arts of humbug and the science of abuse, if you will,” replied Granville, “but no other. Recollect, however, I speak but of some editors, and not at all of those distinguished persons, both in station and knowledge, who lend criticism their able assistance;

themselves (many of them) approved authors in prose and verse, poets, historians, and divines."

" You allow, then," said I, " that there are, as there ought to be, judges in literature, as there are in law?"

" Undoubtedly," replied Granville ; " it is good for authors themselves, as well as for literature, that their faults should be pointed out. But as the judge in law pronounces sentence with dignity, and can never be personal without lowering his character, so the judge of authors can never call names without forfeiting his judicial function. He then becomes a mere thrower of dirt, and liable, as well as deserving, to be pelted in return."

" Nothing more just," said I. " But you talk of it, as if throwing dirt were part of a system."

" Judge for yourself," said he ; " for having, as you know, myself been an amateur reviewer, I have sometimes been let behind the scenes, and once made a curious discovery of crypt secrets."

" Where, and when?" asked I.

" The time, not long ago ; the place, the back-parlour of that very Sourkrout who used poor Graves so ill. Though then a great ally, he has since quarrelled with me for not getting his son a place, which he thought I could do, and as a natural consequence, abuses me now thick and threefold. I ought not, however, to complain, for his abuse was far less injurious to me than his praise.

" ' I never injured you,' said he to me one day.

" ' Yes, you did,' replied I, ' for, you spoke well of me.'

" ' This increased our breach.'

" Which originally began because you could not get his son a place?"

" Exactly so ; but the best is, he was most displeased because I treated his criticism with contempt ; for I shewed no resentment. ' I thought you would not speak to me,' said he, ' after that blow of mine, last week.'

" ' I was not aware of it,' returned I.

" ' The devil you were'nt,' replied he. ' Yet it was a pretty sharp one.'

" ' A blow must hurt, or do some damage, to cause resentment,' said I, ' so you are safe.' Mr. Sourkrout at this walked off, and has never spoken to me since. "

" But your discovery?" said I.

" It was this. In the days of our friendship, boasting of the perfection to which he had brought the art of periodical criticism, so as to insure the rapidity so necessary for the shop, he one day shewed me a common-place book, drawn up by himself to facilitate it. In this was an article entitled *Epithets*, composed of two columns, *favourable* and *unfavourable*. The first had very little

belonging to it ; but the other was such a volume of Billingsgate, as almost put me to flight. There were ranged in order, under the head of Epithets, ‘ fool, dolt, bæotian, worm, spider, carrion,—ravings, brayings, slaver—mendacious, mare’s nest, pickthank, toad-eater, lickspittle.’

“ This you would think enough ; but these were single epithets. There were, therefore, compounds, or a kind of half-sentences, as ‘ insane and silly being ; bloated mass of self-conceit ; absurdity and insolence ; pitiful piece of puling ; consummate arrogance ; debility of understanding, and feebleness of genius ; abominable egotism and dogmatism’.”

“ This was for any persons who presumed to laugh at Mr. Sourkrout, of whom, to his astonishment, there were not a few.

“ Then came whole sentences, ready cut and dried. ‘ No knowledge of facts ; style below mediocrity ; dull details ; not a spark of enlightened thought ; totally ignorant of the spirit of the age ; behind it by at least a hundred years.’”

“ This was for historical writers.

“ Then followed ‘ bigot, zealot, reverend blockhead, inquisitor, burnings in Smithfield, intolerance, ignorance, those old women the Fathers ; dreams, hypocrisy, mammon of bishops ;’ in short, *odium theologicum* in all its details.

“ This was for divines.

“ Then again, ‘ Incapable of drawing a character ; has seen no life, and not able to describe it if he had ; fails in his heroines ; has no knowledge of the heart, like Richardson ; of manners, like Fielding ; of pathos, like Sterne ; or of the world at large, like Le Sage.’

“ This for the novelists.

“ There were also some general maxims in the form of memorandums, very useful as a key, and also to prevent getting into scrapes. For example :

“ Mem. 1st.—‘ If the author not patronized by our shop, or not of our party in politics or religion, should the work be favoured by the town, and too good to pull to pieces, find what fault you can with small things, confine yourself to generals, and *leave out all the chief scenes and characters.*’

“ Mem. 2nd.—‘ If you criticize a particular word, always look into Johnson first, for fear you should be wrong ; but if, for want of this, you should be proved guilty of ignorance yourself, never retract ; and if in any of your assertions you are convicted of a lie,

¹ You may doubt, reader, but in this polite age, all these epithets are to be found in one or other of the daily, weekly, monthly, or quarterly literary press. Yet these are from the pens of scholars and the liberally educated. No doubt, as the writers are men who think they have the learning of Scaliger, they would prove it by imitating his temper and elegance. “*Stercus diaboli*,” and “*lutum stercore maceratum*,” were some of his phrases towards those he attacked.

repeat it, and you are safe. Besides, nobody knows who you are, so you fight comfortably behind a wall.'

"Mem. 3rd.—'If you write against a critic of another concern, remember he has no resources, no independence of his own, but is a bookseller's hack; a venal scribe; a tool, *et cætera*. If against a lawyer, be sure to quote Cicero, '*leguleius, præco actionum, cantor formularum, anceps syllabarum*;' and give a proper sprinkling of pettifogger, special pleader, Old Bailey counsel, sharp practice, and the like.'"

"If all this be correct," observed I, "it is systematic with a vengeance."

"Yes," replied Granville; "and so far do they carry it, that once being in Sourkrout's parlour, one of his writers came in, in a hurry, with his pen behind his ear, evidently big with composition. Taking me perhaps for a brother journeyman, and going doggedly on with his work, he asked abruptly whether Mr. Fairchild, whose book was to be cut up, was thick or thin?"

"O, very thin," replied Sourkrout, laughing.

"That's enough," said the scribe, and immediately disappeared. I was completely lost at this; till, upon questioning him, Sourkrout informed me that thick or thin alluded to the skin of the author, which it was necessary to know, because the *personal* notice of him was to be manufactured accordingly. 'For there are some of these fellows,' said Sourkrout, 'who are as tough as alligators; others as soft as wool-packs. You may fire shot at the one, and not penetrate; or beat the other with a club, and he will shrink, but always puffs out again as much as before. You may as well beat a carpet.'

"I think," concluded Granville, "I have now let you sufficiently into the nature of some, at least, of these guiders of the public taste, who have the curse of Ishmael upon them; for their hand is against every man, and every man's hand against them. Like chimney-sweepers, too, the more dirt they rake together, the more happy they are."

"A charming lesson," said I, "by which, if ever I turn author, I hope to profit. But are all of this description?"

"God forbid," replied he; "for I could name, and have introduced you to several whose candour and good manners are equal to their abilities."

"But is there no chastising such nuisances?" asked I.

"Yes; for an illiberal critic is always as thin-skinned as Mr. Fairchild himself. Flog him, therefore, with his own rod—that is, review his review—and he will whine like a hyæna, or squeak like a pig; particularly if he be an author himself, and you review him in your turn. No one is then so sore; not Sir Fretful himself; and he will go whining about the town, wondering what can have oc-

casioned him so many enemies. This, however, is rare, because he generally conceals his identity under the royal term *WE*, while the honest author is forced, for the most part, to present himself *in puris naturalibus*¹."

All this astonished me. I owned my notion both of the character and consequence of a critic was incorrect, and was no longer surprised at the sort of subdued, but ill-concealed hatred which we see entertained towards some of these self-elected censors in society, over which, whenever they appear, they seem to throw a wet blanket.

"You, therefore," said Granville, "ought to feel yourself the more fortunate in finding, from those to whom I have introduced you, that there can be critics who are not slanderous, and who may be judges of literature without ceasing to be gentlemen."

"Those you allude to," said I, "are undoubtedly of that sort : Mr.——, for example, seems to justify the account of rational and just criticism given by Pope :

'The generous critic fann'd the poet's fire,
And taught the world with reason to admire;
Then Criticism the Muse's handmaid proved,
To dress her charms, and make her more beloved.'"

"Good," observed Granville. "But even Pope says that many of these critics were soon corrupted ; and you should have gone on with your quotation :

'But following wits from that intention stray'd,
Who could not win the mistress, woo'd the maid;
Against the poets their own arms they turn'd—
Sure to hate most the men from whom they learn'd.'"

"But why hate?" asked I. "That is the question I should like to have solved."

"It is solvable," said Granville, "by the one single word CONTEMPORARY. People in general do not hate the dead ; nor even the living, when removed from the sphere of rivalry or adverse interest. Criticism, *then*, is prompted by a real love and taste for literature, and a real desire to promote its interests. At any rate, the critics have no wish to exhibit any one *but* the author. A modern reviewer, of the character we have been investigating, whatever his

¹ See the subject of anonymous criticism ably and pungently treated by Sir E. L. Bulwer, in his *England and the English*, Book IV.

"There are only two classes of men," says this observing essayist, "to whom the anonymous is really desirable. The perfidious gentleman, who fears to be cut by the friend he injures (to which it might have added, who fears for his own works), and the lying blackguard, who dreads to be horsewhipt by the man he maligns."

Pity that Sir Edward is able to support the first part of this observation by the example of a highly-gifted nobleman, one of whose best compositions, he says, was discovered in a review to be a most truculent attack upon his intimate companion.

taste for literature, is chiefly swayed by his personal feeling in regard to the writer; the interest he chiefly espouses is that of the shop; and the person he most wishes to exhibit is—himself¹.”

These observations of Granville, the result of much experience, as well as natural sagacity, to say nothing of an enviable *sang-froid*, which enabled him to judge without passion the most passionate set of people in the world, did me a great deal of good; or rather would have done it, had I continued inclined to turn either author or critic. In fact, however, I had not time for either; for all reading and writing was absorbed by official papers².

¹ In the same spirit with this remark, the acute and thinking Lord Dudley (himself a reviewer) says, in one of his letters to the Bishop of Llandaff, recently published, “If any branch of the public administration were as ‘*infamously jobbed*’ as the *Reviews*, it must soon fall a victim to the just indignation of the world.” See also an able pamphlet called, “*Reviewers Reviewed*,” by Mr. O’Reid. “Literature itself,” he states, “*interests but few, though it employs so many more. Its honours are degraded; its pleasures are but little understood; it has assumed a commercial character, and is esteemed in this light. It has fallen a prey to criticism.*”

² Though Granville having finished his strictures, I will not add to them in his own name, I cannot help here recollecting the sharp cutting-knife of a most trenchant, though a less polished person than Lady Hungerford’s admirer; and as there are malignant and ignorant critics, as well as fair and learned ones, while I honour the *latter*, I would address to the *former* what Swift says of their mother, in the “*Battle of the Books*.” It will wind up the subject excellently well:—

“Meanwhile Momus, fearing the worst, and calling to mind an ancient prophecy, which bore no very good face to his children the moderns, bent his flight to the region of a malignant deity, called *Criticism*. She dwelt on the top of a snowy mountain in Nova Zembla: there Momus found her extended in her den, upon the spoils of numberless volumes, half devoured. At her right hand sat Ignorance, her father and husband, blind with age; at her left, Pride, her mother, dressing her up in the scraps of paper herself had torn. There was Opinion, her sister, light of foot, hood-winked and headstrong, yet giddy and perpetually turning. About her played her children, Noise and Impudence, Dulness and Vanity, Positiveness, Pedantry, and Ill-manners. The goddess herself had claws like a cat; her head, and ears, and voice, resembled those of an ass; her teeth fallen out before; her eyes turned inward, as if she looked only upon herself; *her diet was the overflowing of her own gall*; and, what is wonderful to conceive, the bulk of her spleen increased faster than the sucking of her children could diminish it.

“‘Goddess,’ said Momus, ‘can you sit idly here, while our devout worshippers, the moderns, are this minute entering into a cruel battle, and perhaps now lying under the swords of their enemies? Who, then, hereafter, will ever sacrifice or build altars to our divinities? Haste, therefore, to the British Isle, and, if possible, prevent their destruction; while I make factions among the gods, and gain them over to our party.’

“Momus having thus delivered himself, staid not for an answer, but left the goddess to her own resentment. Up she rose in a rage, and, as it is form on such occasions, began a soliloquy: ‘It is I,’ said she, ‘who give wisdom to infants and idiots; by me, children grow wiser than their parents; by me, beaux become politicians, and schoolboys judges of philosophy; by me, sophisters debate, and conclude upon the depths of knowledge; and coffee-house wits, instinct by me, can correct an author’s style, and display his minutest errors, without understanding a syllable of his matter, or his language; by me, striplings spend their judgment, as they do their estate, before it comes into their hands. It is I who have deposed wit and knowledge from their empire over poetry, and advanced myself in their stead. And shall a few upstart ancients dare oppose me? But come, my aged parents, and you, my children dear, and thou, my beauteous sister; let us ascend my chariot, and haste to assist our devout moderns, who are now sacrificing to us a hecatomb, as I perceive by the grateful smell, which from thence reaches my nostrils.’

“The goddess and her train, having mounted the chariot, which was drawn by tame geese, flew over infinite regions, shedding her influence in due places, till at length she arrived at her beloved island of Britain.”

SWIFT’S *Battle of the Books*. Works 2, 301.

CHAPTER XIV.

OF THE KIND CONSIDERATION OF LORD CASTLETON, AND THE PLEASANT REMEDY HE APPLIED TO AN INCIPIENT ILLNESS.—I MEET SIR HARRY MELFORD, AND MAKE A NEW AND INTERESTING ACQUAINTANCE.—EFFECTS OF A DISAPPOINTMENT IN LOVE ON DIFFERENT DISPOSITIONS.—QUESTIONS AS TO WHAT MAY BE ATTRIBUTED TO LOVE, WHAT TO PRIDE.

A babble of green fields.

SHAKESPEARE.—*Henry V.*

O, what a noble mind is here o'erthrown!

Hamlet.

THE attention I gave to my official duties, partly from necessity, partly from taste, and greatly from the pleasure which I saw it gave Lord Castleton, had now become so intense, that a pale cheek and a bilious eye proved to my patron that I was overdone. Of this he was himself so guiltless, that he was the first to remark, with a view to relieve it; and, with the consideration that belonged to him, he said to me one day at the close of pressing business which had absorbed many hours, "Industry in an official can never be but valuable, and joined with talent must lead to fortune. But too much application may defeat itself. Lord Somers indeed, it is said, though a man of polite literature, at last came to like a statute at large as well as he ever did Homer or Virgil; and when another minister fainted away, it was proposed to burn an Act of Parliament under his nose, as the most certain remedy to recover him. But you are not yet so broke in to the trammels of business to feel like them. Perhaps you have come too early and suddenly into laborious office, to which, as to every thing, one ought to be trained; and, as a scholar, you must regret the opportunities you lose for liberal studies, which office seldom gives you time to pursue. Whatever small stock of them I myself possess, I laid in long before I became so actively employed; and though, sometimes, *vacare literis* is perhaps the best maxim a man of business, particularly of political business, can adopt, it is more wished for than enjoyed. We are so tied to the

'Fumum et opes strepitumque Romæ,'

and the

'Superba civium potentiorum limina,'

that we sigh for a little wholesome leisure to put our thoughts in order, and recover our classics. This we cannot do in

‘ The smoke and stir of this dim spot
Which men call London.’

I shall, therefore, instead of sending you to an apothecary, which I must if you stay here, send you to green fields, about which, you know even Falstaff babbled when he was ill and dying. Him, indeed, they did not recover, but you are not so far gone; so my orders to you for to-morrow, instead of the papers I gave you, are to set out for Windsor Forest.”

Struck with this kindness, he saw how it overjoyed me; and went on to say, “ Truth is, I have a letter from the excellent Manners, intimating that though he recommended you to me as a secretary, he did not design I should steal his pupil from him, or make you forget that there were other books besides those of the Privy Council, and other gardens besides Kensington; in short, Windsor Forest and the Grange. I would therefore advise you to go there now for a day or two; and, for some time to come, to make a regular citizen’s holiday of it, and go down to him every Saturday and Sunday; cultivate the muse, listen to his didactics (you may do a worse thing), or wander with him to the Warren House, and come back fresh to your task, which will then not operate as an opiate in regard to the *litteræ humaniores*.”

Nothing could fall in better with my own wishes than this considerate plan, which only added still more to my veneration for the accomplished nobleman who proposed it. It may be supposed I profited by it, and it had the effect of uniting me more than ever with one of the most rational guides and companions that a youth ever had. For by his knowledge of men and his knowledge of philosophy, Manners was a compound of Horace and Plato, to say nothing of his pastoral feelings, in those most pastoral of spots, Binfield, and Asher’s Wood. The remembrance is still green with me, as the woods themselves when clothed in all their honours, and this will account for the rapture I indulged, in a former chapter, when I hailed my first approach to Windsor Forest, as the seat of my happiest acquirements¹.

One effect of these country retirements was not only to relieve the waste of town occupations, but to give a greater zest to town society.

After all the fine things which retirement deserves to have said of it, particularly when sought in order to get acquainted with one’s self, its advantages are best brought to perfection by a collision

¹ See Vol. I., p. 304.

with other minds, which see things differently ; so that by viewing them in other lights and by other experiences, the prejudice and one-sidedness of solitude may be corrected, and more chance obtained of arriving at truth.

Hence Manners, often on my quitting him to return to town, used to say,

“ Go ; continue to observe, to note, and to remember ; lay in a fresh stock of materials, and come back with them, that we may examine their value, and turn them to shape.”

The thought of this made the opinions and manners I met with in London of more consequence than perhaps they otherwise would have been. Here my intimacy with Granville was very valuable, as a mean of introducing me to a greater variety of acquaintances than I could have otherwise achieved ; men of different complexions, the thinking as well as the careless, the theoretical, the practical, the strict, the loose ; and the collision, as I have called it, of all these, by always producing some addition to our stock of ideas, seldom failed to end in good.

For this purpose, though not, as I have stated, passing rich, Granville occasionally indulged himself in a little dinner society, where, though the treat was not extravagant, it was elegant, and though the company was not numerous, it was select.

Having engaged me one day to one of these parties, he surprised me by saying,

“ Among others, you will meet your old acquaintance, Sir Harry Melford.”

I almost started at that name, and felt a little alarmed, from old, and not over pleasant, associations. This I told Granville, but he answered,

“ Poor fellow ! you need not fear. You will meet a most altered creature. His gaiety, his good-breeding, and that air of decorous self-possession which generally gained him favour, are gone ; all changed into either a reckless tone of libertinism, or a sullenness, evidently from uneasiness of mind, which he in vain endeavours to conceal.”

I felt seriously sorry for this, and asked if there was any reason for it.

“ I can guess it,” said Granville, “ and have long lamented it ; for I have thought and still think him made for better things ; and as, if I am right as to the cause of it, it was a fellow-feeling with you of despair as to a certain lady, I can only felicitate you upon not being involved in the same consequences.”

This, as may be supposed, engaged all my interest, especially when he went on to tell me, that, soon after the final extinction of his hopes of Bertha, to recover himself, Melford went abroad, and

most mistakenly sought his cure in a career of unbridled dissipation, not to say libertine pleasures, and returned after a year's absence, with a woman, beautiful, clever, and accomplished indeed, but dissolute and desighing, and not even affording him the poor excuse, that she had sacrificed herself to him alone. In truth, though certainly very fascinating, she was a *femme aventurière*.

"You have seen her then?" said I.

"Yes; and with all her personal attractions, so evidently is she the cause of ruin to the originally fine mind of our friend, that I could not help hating her as much as I pitied him. That she had made him a father, by no means diminished the feeling of either one or the other. In a word, it was evident that she was making it instrumental to a design, which everybody could perceive but himself, to trepan him into marriage; and in the prospect of success in this, she had already become neglectful both of his comfort and the personal elegance to which she owed so much of her power.

"In truth," continued Granville, "soon after I first saw her, she seemed to have abandoned that minute attention to her dress and appearance which always goes for something with even an unworthy female, and actually shewed symptoms of a married slattern, who had relieved herself from the necessity of neatness. He saw it too, yet could not break his bonds. I wanted no other proof of his proximity to misery."

"This is a sad picture," said I. "Was it in his own house that you saw this? Had he gone such full length towards loss of character, as to take her home to him?"

"Why no; what I allude to was at an inn at Wetherby, where he had put up for the night. In his way, you know, he passed the gates of Foljambe, and his change of life since he had been received there undervary different colours, made me mark the incident with more interest; for I was sent by my good uncle, who knew not this *liaison dangereuse*, to invite him to the park."

"And did he comply?"

"No; and it was his mode of receiving the invitation, and evident distress upon it, that told me the real state of his mind, however he may have disguised, or attempted to disguise it since."

"This opens a useful lesson," said I; "I should like to know the particulars."

"It was by chance," replied Granville, "from a call by your friend Sandford, that Mr. Hastings knew Sir Harry was on the road, and as he had never been at Foljambe, but studiously avoided it since his separation from Bertha, my uncle, out of his kindly nature, tried to tempt him to come and stay the night with him in preference to an inn, and with this view, as giving more weight to it, begged me to go over with the invitation.

“I did so, and shall not soon forget the scene. Though the evening had not closed in, both Sir Harry and his mistress were in slippers and *robes de chambre*. The lady, all dishevelled, was trying, though angrily, to quiet her brat (who was squalling unmercifully), and scolding poor Sir Harry for accusing her of having ill-managed the child. He himself looked sulky, and not the less for a dirty French nurse who took her mistress's part. The room still smelt of the dinner, divers garments were strewed upon the chairs, and it was thus I discovered the once gay Melford, proverbial for his elegance of dress and manner, and happy, cheerful aspect, reduced to be hen-pecked, not even by a wife.

“He started when he saw me, and his lady, snatching up her child, ran slip-shod out of the room, followed by her *soubrette*. Poor Melford looked heartily ashamed, and could scarcely give me the common compliments of reception. But when I told him the message I was charged with, which was in truth couched in the most kind and friendly terms, for I was bidden to lament, in my uncle's name, that they should be separated, and intreat him to return to the old footing, he became unusually and violently affected. He strode across the room, struck his forehead more than once, and casting his eyes upon parts of his child's dress and a coral which were left behind, he heaved a deep sigh, and squeezing me by the hand, said,

“My dear friend, I am not worthy of it. This sad affair with Hortense! I dare not present myself at the park, the abode of all that is pure and virtuous—there is no disguising it, I DARE not come. Tell them not how you found me; yet that I am greatly obliged, and sorry that I cannot accept——”

“Here he stopt, and in effect, pitying him from my soul, I could not attempt to persuade him. We soon therefore parted, and I left him to such happiness as Hortense could give him.”

“And yet,” observed I, “you say Hortense was beautiful and accomplished.”

“She was attractingly, nay, voluptuously so, and her eye fascinating as a basilisk's when she pleased. Off his guard, therefore, and perhaps seeking refuge in sophistry, to escape from his disappointment with Bertha, he persuaded himself, that his connection with a well-bred, handsome courtesan, ranked with, and gave as much pleasure as a more legitimate attachment. I have heard him hold something like it, when, in a fit of resentment against the whole sex, he has said, as none of them have any heart, without which their virtue is of little consequence, it is quite unnecessary either to seek or expect more happiness than a beautiful exterior and accomplished manners can supply. The scene, however, I have described told a different story as to his feelings.”

“Yet you say he is not recovered, but has fallen into downright libertinism. How is that possible for one who ever loved or understood Bertha?”

“I fear,” replied Granville, “it is because—while tied to this woman (by whom he has another child), and who now rules him despotically—he thinks he has nothing left for it but to follow up his doctrine of ‘I take her body, you her mind; which has the better bargain?’”

“The truth I fear is, that, though no one can dispute that he loved Bertha, and, had he gained her, would have made a happy husband, his love was not unmixed with the pride which success with one so beautiful, well-born, and rich would have made him feel. Hence the madness caused by his disappointment was not for disappointment in love *alone*, but very strongly mixed with mortified vanity. Perhaps, also, his love was more sensual than pure, and in that case, his love of pleasure, as well as his hurt pride, drove him originally to this mode of revenge—for revenge he thought it. Had his affection for her been as pure as yours, he never would have stooped to such unworthy means of shewing his resentment.

“We shall, however, perhaps know more of him to-day, if the bottle, to which I am sorry to find he has too often recourse, in order to forget himself, will permit it.”

Much impressed by this story, I thanked Granville for his good opinion, and became almost impatient for his dinner party.

We were all assembled some time before Sir Harry made his appearance, and when he did so, I was shocked. Not only he had *slouched* in, as he said himself, in the *déshabillé* in which he had passed the whole morning, without the least attention even to cleanliness, but his features, formerly so composed with tranquil good-breeding, seemed wild and haggard, his brow knit, and his cheek flushed, as if he had been engaged in altercation. He made, however, no apology for being so late; saying bluntly enough, that as he had done dressing, even for the ladies, and knew he was to meet nobody but a set of bachelors, he thought they would rather admit him as a sloven, than be kept waiting.”

“If you have consulted your own comfort in this,” observed Granville (ambiguously, as I thought), “we have nothing to say.”

And we took our places at the table.

As he came so late, there had not been time for introductions, and it was only upon Granville’s calling upon me casually by name that Sir Harry seemed to notice me with his glass—when I could plainly perceive, by the effect it had upon him, that he had made me out as the person of possibly what he thought an equivocal de-

scription, between gentleman and humble friend, whom he had formerly met, in doubtful circumstances, at York.

The remembrance certainly affected him, for he looked intensely at me, sighed, and was silent, and seemed to wish to drown thought by a rapid challenge of bumpers with every one at the table.

Not content with this, at the dessert he made a desperate attack on a vase of brandy cherries, confirming uncomfortably the account Granville had heard of his disposition to raise artificial spirits from these libations.

By those means, though at first he had been almost sullenly silent, he grew in the end loquacious upon almost all the subjects that were started, particularly on one, which not unnaturally, in a company of young men, almost all unmarried, turned upon the character, power, and influence of women.

This, always interesting to me, was rendered peculiarly so by the manner in which he treated it, as I could never forget that he had been the sincere lover of Bertha, and therefore most likely to do justice to the question. How was I surprised and disappointed, notwithstanding Granville's forewarning, to hear what I did! How did I lament what seemed to me the overthrow of a mind, which, I agreed with Granville in thinking, was made for better things.

The conversation turning, I know not by what introduction, upon the licentiousness of the times of Charles II. and Louis XIV., and the manners and engagements of women in those days, Sir Harry professed himself their unqualified admirer, as the only example of real freedom of life, unrestrained by musty rules, made only, he said, to tyrannize over the young and ardent of both sexes, under sophistical pretences.

He, of course, laughed at marriage, and declared it a crafty invention of priests and lawyers, and adopted by statesmen to keep people in trammels, and save trouble. It followed that he was an advocate for the doctrines which, growing out of the licentiousness of French romances, were beginning to be seriously entertained by the then wide-spreading philosophy which was hastening the crisis of the French revolution. By these it was held, and afterwards for a time made law, that marriage meant an agreement of men and women to live together so long as they were mutually pleased, and no longer.

What was called the virtue of a woman, he counted for nothing, being, as he said, the result of force. He supported this theory by examples drawn from the *authorized liaisons*, as he called them, at Paris, where he seemed to have studied them, as well as from a number of those loose and mischievous memoirs of actresses, and fashionable demireps, which from time to time had appeared, and had been equally the object of his research. Some of these were

Ninon de Lenclos, Constantia Philips, Mrs. Baddeley, Mrs. Robinson, *et id genus omne*—in all of which he appeared to be well versed.

To do justice to Granville's party, though almost all very young men, we looked at one another with a kind of disgust at these sentiments, which Granville endeavoured to get rid of, rather than answer, by saying he was quite sure his friend Sir Harry was not serious in them, and only broached them as amusing paradoxes.

Sir Harry, however, declined availing himself of the retreat thus offered, declaring he was perfectly in earnest; and moreover added (for by this time the claret began to work), that he did not believe there was one in the company who, if he dared, would not avow himself of the same opinion.

"I should be sorry to think that," said Mr. Brownlow, a gentleman of about Granville's age, of uncommon intelligence of features as well as elegance of appearance, and who, it seems, after having had the reputation of being a great champion, as well as admirer of the sex, was lately married. "I believe I know something of women, and I beg not to be included in this sweeping declaration."

"We shall be all against you, Melford," said Granville, "so you may as well give in, and confess that you have thrown up a straw to see how the wind lies."

"No such thing," replied Sir Harry; "and least of all, since Brownlow professes to be against me—the most determined devotee and worshipper in the temple of Cupid; whose taste in beauty is proverbial, and who is courted by the women for a good word, or bad sonnet, to put them into fashion."

Brownlow good-humouredly joined in the laugh which this occasioned, observing, however somewhat seriously,

"If I am, indeed, all this, I trust it may be a proof that I am not a bad judge of my subject, and that I may be right in opposing every one of the strange positions you have laid down, particularly when you disparage marriage, and prefer a brittle mistress, even (as I would allow you to mean) as a mere source of pleasure, to a virtuous wife."

"This, to *me*," replied the baronet; "me, who have heard you rave by the hour about Madame Rossi's grace and Miss Brown's charms¹; so that you never missed an opera when one danced in *Don Juan*; nor the *Duenna*, or *Beggar's Opera*, when the other sang in Clara or Polly. Nay, you are talked of, and cannot deny it, as one of the initiated, a hero of the Green-room."

Here Sir Harry got another little laugh against Mr. Brownlow.

¹ Madame Rossi was the Taglioni of this time; and Miss Brown, afterwards Mrs. Cargill, the original Clara of the *Duenna*, and most attractive Polly in the *Beggar's Opera*.

who, however, sustained himself with dignity, though he pleaded guilty to the whole charge of admiring the theatrical charms of both the ladies mentioned, and even of his pleasure sometimes in the Green-room.

“You see,” said he, “I deny nothing, for, in truth, it is this very experience of the little real power of attraction in your goddesses that gives me a right to protest against your opinions. I may and do find pleasure in contemplating the talents, and, if you will, the beauty, of these and other celebrated ladies (the whole sex at large, if it so please you); but do not mistake me—with all my devotion, and whatever my admiration of them for the passing hour,—for her person, her wit, or her accomplishments, I could not live as a companion with any woman whom I could not esteem.”

Sir Harry looked a little disconcerted, especially when we all seemed to approve the sentiment; but still more when Mr. Brownlow went on—

“Her wit, indeed, if it was very racy and pungent, as was said of Lady Dorchester’s and Nell Gwyn’s, I might admire; her accomplishments might even fill me with wonder; but would this either create a moral respect, or satisfy the heart? When passion was gratified, and languished, as it soon would, what would be left to renew, or continue, much more to heighten it? Any thing from mind? from reciprocity of sentiment? from mutual esteem? No. She has no mind; or if she has, it can only embitter her feelings, by making her lament the loss of her virtue.”

“Is virtue, then, or rather chastity, for that is your meaning,” said Sir Harry, “a *sine qua non* to good taste? In the arts, or *belles-lettres*, for instance? May not an elegant-minded mistress be your companion there?”

“My point is,” answered Brownlow, “that in an unchaste woman, or one who has parted with her honour, this elegance of mind is not to be found.”

“What! may not she understand and admire a picture or a statue?”

“Yes; particularly if they partake, as they very likely may, of her own licentiousness; but in the *belles-lettres*, which you also mentioned, I should say not;—for genuine *belles-lettres* having good taste for their province, and all good taste, that is, real elegance of mind, requiring delicacy and virtue for their foundation, nay, their very essence, a woman destitute of these, as an unchaste woman must be, cannot feel their real beauties.”

“According to you, then, a kept mistress could not relish Shakspeare?”

“I know not,” said Brownlow, “what parts of him she might relish; but there are parts which, if she is not lost to all feeling,

must make her ashamed, despairing, and unhappy. What woman of loose conduct, if not abandoned, could contemplate the innocent Juliet or Desdemona, Imogen or Ophelia, and, far from pleasure, not turn with horror to herself? But if abandoned, what pretension can she have to the delicacy of mind which I have said is essential to the good taste necessary to make a woman a companion?"

We all applauded this sentiment, and the baronet looked embarrassed.

"As my support in this," continued Brownlow, "recollect the poor Jesse of Shenstone, once seemingly endowed with a taste for elegance, but lost with her innocence :

' If thro' the garden's flowery walks I stray,
And court the jasmins which could once allure,
Hope not to find delight in us, they say,
For we are spotless, Jesse, we are pure.'

Such self-condemnation, by destroying all cheerfulness, must at once destroy companionship, and render even beauty nugatory, perhaps repulsive; and thus, as far as even mere passion is concerned, your heroine has lost the power of creating it, and has dwindled either into a sorrowful mope, or a reckless, abandoned prostitute."

Instead of answering this forcible elucidation, Sir Harry filled his glass to the brim, and began beating the devil's tattoo under the table; and it was easy to see he was maintaining a contest with himself; but, rallying a little, he observed,

"This will, at least, not apply to a mistress's wit. That surely must remain intrinsically wit, whatever becomes of esteem."

"I am too fond of wit, as a mark of intellectual vigour," returned Mr. Brownlow, "to deny its power. But in this instance, what power? To please by filling the understanding, and giving food for reflection? No; to amuse, perhaps to dazzle and excite, but only for a moment. The effect over, it revives not. Like a cordial, it warms and kindles, but has no nourishment; for we love not, because we do not respect the person of the speaker, and our esteem for intellect is so mingled with disesteem for character, that we do not remember what is spoken with pleasure."

"According to this," said Sir Harry, "you would not admire a beautiful passage in a play, should the actor be a bad moral character."

"I should endeavour," returned Brownlow, "to think only of the author, and forget the actor."

"But how, if the author himself was a profligate? Would that derogate from the beauty of the language?"

"Not from its beauty in the abstract," returned Brownlow, "but

from my pleasure in it, certainly, unless I could succeed in forgetting the writer."

"What think you of Sterne or Rousseau?" asked Sir Harry.

"As writers or men?" asked Brownlow,

"As both conjoined," replied Sir Harry.

"Much as I admire them as writers," said his opponent, "if I think of their characters while reading, I answer distinctly and fairly, my pleasure is much diminished."

"What! at the pathos which surrounds Uncle Toby and Le Fevre, or the wit that belongs to old Shandy!"

"Even so; unless, as it luckily often happens, that in this wit and pathos I am so beguiled, that I forget the bad husband and pretended lover of virtue."

"And Rousseau?"

"There I am very clear; for in all his most eloquent touches, I never do, and never can, forget the hypocritical sophist—the avowed thief—the false witness—the deserter of his offspring. No, Melford, do not be led astray by the meteor of false sentiment, into the deceit of thinking evil good; or good evil; or that a woman's virtue does not heighten her charms, even to a man of pleasure. But, as to the meretricious attractions of the persons you have mentioned, be assured, what I always thought, and now know, is true; that one kind look, one soft pressure of the hand, from the wife of your heart, who loves you, and knows you love her, is worth a whole harem of purchased favours."

This address seemed by no means thrown away upon him to whom it was directed, for he not only shewed signs of being beat, but of inward distress, for which, when I thought of what had caused this change in his character, I heartily pitied him.

Nor was it lost upon any of us, least of all upon myself; for I conceived both liking and respect for Brownlow, who did honour to that undefinable character, a man of fashion; and I was glad, by Granville's particular introduction to him, to add so worthily to the list of my select acquaintance.

Having outstaid the company, Granville gave me the following account of Brownlow:—

"He is a man of fortune," said he, "good family, and of the best *monde*; or, as Shakspeare would say, 'of great admittance.' He has been as much what is called a man of pleasure, as a pure taste and fine mind would permit him to be, so as to have acquired much knowledge of the ways, perhaps of the corruptions of society, without being corrupted himself. His talents for pure and good criticism threw him at one time a good deal into the theatrical world, where his judgment was much respected, and his notice courted by the women as much as the men; and hence Melford's

allusions. But, if not his virtue, his *taste*, in regard to the sex, of which you saw a good specimen, kept him pure in those opinions which he so well enforced; and in this he was the more lucky, for, previous to his present happiness in marriage with a woman of great beauty and merit, he was a warm and ill-used lover."

"Ha!" cried I; "was such a man ill-used? Disappointed perhaps?"

"Downright jilted."

"You amaze me!"

"I thought I should; and I am not sorry that you have seen him thus flourishing and happy, because I had him often in my mind when I told you that a man might love to distraction, and yet recover; nay, as in this gentleman's instance, rejoice in his failure in one place, for his far superior happiness in another."

"This must be an interesting history," said I.

"It is; but not on account of any particular adventures—any romance—but merely from the completeness of his recovery, and his achievement afterwards of the most perfect felicity, from a state of seemingly the most torturing desolation."

This excited me more and more, and I told Granville he was too slow in his narration.

"You will be more impatient as we go on," said he, "for the love between him and his first mistress commenced when he was a youth and she a girl."

"Good. But pray go on."

"Her father, a country gentleman, was one of his guardians; he sometimes passed a vacation from college with them, and the woods and fields, the primroses and nightingales, produced their usual effect; in short, they fell violently in love with each other, though Elizabeth felt the indications of it first, and so ingenuously confessed it, that it operated most with him in producing the passion he felt on his part. As we were schoolfellows and fellow-collegians, I speak with full information."

"Pray get on," said I.

"Well; eternal constancy, as usual, was vowed; the match approved by papa, when a few years should have matured it, both being so young; meantime, correspondence, and a vast *et cætera*—*quæ nunc prescribere longum est*.

"As I was his confidant, I heard all his accounts of her beauty and merits, and sometimes saw them together; but, except in the common attractions of youth, freshness, and good humour, and a seemingly entire devotion to him, I perceived nothing to justify the frenzy which afterwards ensued on his disappointment."

"There was frenzy, then?"

"Scarcely short of it, I assure you. He was but one-and-twenty

when, though his own letters had begun to be not over warm, he complained that her's were growing cold, and this excited him from a tolerably tame, engaged lover, into one agitated with fears and uncertainties. He thought Elizabeth the most enchanting person upon earth; no one like her; he was perpetually invoking her name, and wrote most passionately; till her own warmth continuing to fall off, he could bear it no longer, and though scarcely of age, he resolved to bring the matter to a point, by insisting upon the immediate fulfilment of the engagement, or a breach of it for ever.

“To his then dismay, and after happiness, the breach was preferred. A winter at Bath, while he was immersed in Oxford studies, and the offers of a headlong young peer, just out of leading-strings, had undermined him; his betrothed was faithless, and he was undone.”

“How could such a person,” asked I, “have such consequence with him as to occasion the misery you say he suffered?”

“Ask,” replied Granville, “those who understand the unintelligible subject of love, in all its million of forms and colours, to explain it, for I could as soon square the circle as tell you. All that I could really gather from it was, that real love is the most difficult thing in the world to discover; so many of its symptoms, and those the most marked and violent, being usurped by other passions.

“In this case, as I told you, my friend seemed frantic with disappointment. He exhibited sometimes a paroxysm of rage—sometimes a silent mournfulness, not the less pitiable, because I thought the occasion of it was unworthy. He was so sunk in bitterness as to loathe all his former occupations, whether of amusement or instruction, and even his food. He would estrange himself from company for weeks, and, like a Camillo, plunge into the depths of the forest of Dean, near which he dwelt, shunning every thing cheerful, and wholly absorbed by the disgust that consumed him.

“And yet I am sure all this passion—this agony of disappointment—was not the effect of love so much as mortification and hurt pride operating upon a sensibility, at that time of his life so morbid, that I feared for his mind. I am persuaded of this, because, while things were smooth, and he thought himself secure, his feelings were comparatively tame. He bore absence most heroically. His eyes did not sparkle, nor his countenance beam with joy, when the lady approached, and he always quitted her with calmness. Had prudence, or any other worldly cause, broke their engagement, I am mistaken if it would have cost him a sigh. On the contrary, I have seen him sigh when he has remarked how little of companionship she possessed for a mind like his. He admired, loved her

at first, as a beautiful child, but no more. He reposed upon this; expected no more; and was negatively happy. How was I astonished, therefore, to witness this burst of fury—this passion of anger—and still more at the lasting effects it seemed to produce upon him. At the distance of twelve months he could not hear her name mentioned, nor even that of the place where she dwelt, without trembling, and he shunned the pathway that led from his garden to the church-door, because several of the tomb-stones by which he had to pass recorded the name of Elizabeth.”

“It would be difficult,” said I, “to pronounce that this was not love, and yet, from your account of the object, it would be still more difficult to suppose it was.”

“All that we can decide upon,” returned Granville, “is, that the very profound and very new apothegm, that Love is blind, is founded in truth. The wonderful part of the story is, that Brownlow’s cure was as unaccountable as his infatuation. This compound passion of love, anger, and resentment, dropt out of his heart of itself, without being immediately influenced by any other. He enjoyed his liberty, and coursed the world in its pleasantest scenes; made a reputation for himself, which you see was deserved, and which went far to his success with the lady he married (Lady Elizabeth Belmore), as opposite to his former Elizabeth as light to darkness.

“And now go home; ponder all you have seen and heard; and rest assured that although, as in the case of poor Melford, a disappointment in love may lead to a destruction of mind (as, in fact, it does often to that of the body), yet such was not the intention of Nature when she indued us with such elasticity of disposition, and such good principles, as shine in Brownlow. Apply this to yourself, and so good night.”

CHAPTER XV.

I HAVE ANOTHER INTERVIEW WITH LADY HUNGERFORD, WHO IS MORE DISCOURAGING AND MYSTERIOUS, YET KINDER THAN EVER.

Thou art all ice—thy kindness freezes.

SHAKSPEARE.—*Richard III.*

I HAVE too long neglected to mention my charming instructress, Lady Hungerford. For though she was pleased to say I no longer wanted schooling, from old kindness she admitted me as usual; nay, as I thought, was more than ever gracious.

I did not plume myself upon this, for I had tact enough to see that Granville's friendship for me, or rather perhaps my friendship for *him*, which made him my constant theme, went full half-way towards the easy footing on which I was treated. Be that as it may, I was never denied, and sometimes without waiting in the ante-room was conducted at once to the boudoir.

On one of these occasions, Lady Hungerford was not there, though she could only just have quitted it, for her keys were in her cabinet, and several letters lay open upon the table. One of them, a very long one, was in a hand I had always too well recollected; and, to my astonishment, delight, and terror, a miniature of the writer, exquisitely painted, and giving all the sparkle as well as sensibility of her countenance, lay by the side of it.

I was quite overpowered—my eyes gloated upon it—I fetched my breath quickly—and was lost in a trance, when my patroness entered.

She saw at once my whole situation; coloured deeply herself, with surprise and agitation, and would have been angry, had she not seen, as she said, that I was more sinned against than sinning. She, however, in a hurried manner, swept the letters from the table, and turned the face of the miniature from my eyes; though that did little good, for the back shewed one of those lovely dark tresses, which I had too often admired not to recognise.

After a minute's silence, during which she seemed to be recollecting herself, Lady Hungerford said,

“This is most untoward. I will own to you that I have kept this picture almost religiously from your sight, from the fear of the very effect which I see it has had upon you; and most seriously do I grieve to see how little you are cured when *most* it behoves you to be so.”

I gave a deep sigh at every thing being thus recalled, but could not help saying,

“Surely, lady, there is some mystery hanging about this agitating subject, which, as you are so kind as to interest yourself about it, you would only be more merciful to explain. Why, may I humbly ask, does it *more* behove me now to be cured than at any other time, when at any, and every time, I feel that not to be so only urges me on to perdition?”

“I had hoped,” replied she, recovering her composure, “never to have heard that sentiment again; and really, from your friend Mr. Granville's account, I thought that your study of the world, in which you were making such progress, had had the effect we both wished for you. This little incident has undeceived me; and I shall certainly ask my uncle to send you abroad with your friend, as soon as the event he expects happens. To remain here is mad-

ness, and pity indeed is it that so fair a fortune in expectancy should be spoiled by such want of firmness." Then, seeing that I was about to reply, she interrupted me, saying, "It is not that I blame your constancy, or that I do not in some measure admire it; but when so strongly forbidden by duty to her, as well as yourself—"

"Duty to her!"

"Yes; for why should you embarrass, and add to her uneasiness?"

"I, madam? I *embarrass*? I *add* to uneasiness? What can this mean? Is not Miss Hastings free—free as air? Unless indeed she too has set her affection where it is not returned; but that—that's impossible!"

"I believe so," said Lady Hungerford. "But let me probe you, and deeply too, in a question which I will not ask if you are afraid of it; for I tell you it will try you."

"If it be any thing," replied I, firmly, "which concerns Miss Hastings' happiness—if it reveal that her affections are both pledged and requited—believe me, though my life depended upon it, I would rejoice."

"Nobly resolved, and nobly uttered," replied Lady Hungerford; "and I am sure my dear Bertha would feel all its generosity, could she know it. But tell me if I am really to understand what it imports, that you could see her married with composure, and be yourself happy?"

"With composure, I will not say," returned I; "but as happy as I am now—nay more, to think that her own happiness was secured, I am very sure of myself when I answer, yes."

"I am very sure," replied the frank and winning lady, "that you yourself deserve all the happiness you have missed, and if that will console you, that your own heart is not unworthy of Bertha's. Were the thing not absolutely impossible, and willed by fate so to be, I could even wish you success; nor, I am free to say, is there any thing in your birth, still less with your mind, and the prospects you have before you, in your worldly situation, which would prevent my doing so. But fate, as I have said, has so willed it, and must be obeyed. The thing, were you an emperor, is quite out of question."

I felt all the kindness and condescension of this speech, and only longed to kiss the fair hand which touched my arm in the eagerness with which she supported it by action. I felt it, however, as a complete death-warrant, and so I told her, adding my entreaty that all the mystery which seemed, particularly of late, to hang about the subject might be cleared up.

"It would," I said, "go farther than any thing else to settle

my mind for ever. As it is," I added, "the uncertainty, the mystery, are far more insupportable than the unequivocal assurance of her hand and heart being betrothed."

Lady Hungerford, smiling at the energy with which I said this, observed, that she thought Rousseau himself could not have expressed his feelings more warmly. Better, however, to forget, instead of nursing them, which it was too plain I was doing.

"Your ladyship need not fear for me," replied I, "provided only that the fact is, as I have gathered it from all quarters—that the execution is ordered, and that there are no hopes of a reprieve."

At this she looked hesitatingly, and at length observed,

"I do not mean to say, that what you have supposed, and seem so to wish, is the absolute fact; nor am I at liberty to say a word more; but if it were (whether this is, or is not, bravado), let me ask, what really would become of your affection?"

"Madam," answered I, "I would hug it to my heart, and carry it with me to the grave."

The amiable woman was moved with this in a manner as remarkable as unexpected. Her cheek flushed, tears glistened in her eyes, and this queen of fashion, this observed of the drawing-room, and ornament of the presence, became an absolute daughter of nature in her simplest and most amiable form. How wrong are upstart railers to suppose that either men or women are *necessarily* hardened because their lot is cast among the great.

Finding that the agitation produced did not subside, she said, with a smile which almost contradicted her words,

"You must go, for 'tis in vain to counsel, and almost to blame you. These conversations do me no good, and must not be renewed. Go; and God bless you."

With that she gave me her hand, which with all her kindness she had never done before, and I left her in a tumult of curiosity as well as of anxiety; for, while I considered this conversation more than ever decisive of my fate, there was a mystery about it, which I would have given more than I was worth to unravel.

That day there was another great dinner at Lord Castleton's, very different from the last I described, as having been so honoured by the attendance of the illustrious Paragraph. In my then frame of mind, perhaps this was the best thing that could have happened, to

¹ This reflection, just in itself, is supported by a trait in a very great person, so pleasing, that I cannot help transcribing it. When the Dauphin of France was attacked by the small-pox, in 1752, his wife passed days and nights by his bed-side. Pousse, a blunt physician, called in, and being a stranger to the court, did not know her, and thought she was a hired nurse. "Parbleu," said he, "voilà la meilleure garde que j'aie vue. Comment vous appelle-t-on, ma bonne?"—*Mém. de Mad. Du Hausset*.

Catalogues are made of the crimes of royal persons; why not of their virtues?

divert it from the consuming thoughts which my interview with Lady Hungerford had generated. But my thoughts, not at all prepared to wander into the world, were centered more than ever in the comparatively little spot which contained all that, in my mind at least, that world could boast of, that was worth pursuing.

I would, therefore, far more readily have shut myself up with Granville, who called upon me an hour before dinner, to whom I related all that had passed with Lady Hungerford, and whom I in vain sounded, and at last entreated, as one in confidence of the family, to supply what Lady Hungerford thought it her duty to refuse me.

"I have long," said I, "thought there was some mystery hanging over this too fascinating being—fascinating, you know, to others as well as to me, but whose addresses she refused. At her age, and with her great part in the world, if she choose to play it, to remain shut up within so small, though seemingly so magic a circle as Foljambe, from which, as if spell-bound, she does not issue, never coming to London, or approaching the court, which she seems formed to adorn as well as a rural shrine; her father, though old, not being any obstacle to this from want of health or even inclination:—all this surely must appear as marvellous to you as to me, unless you have a key to it."

"You forget," said he (endeavouring, as I thought, to parry my question), "the domestic calamity they suffered, not so long ago as for its effect to have subsided. With all his faults Mr. Hastings loved his son, and she her brother, so much so, that although not in the same degree, we might almost compare her feelings to those of the lady Olivia in *Twelfth Night*, who also lost a brother,

‘ For whose dear love,
They say she hath abjured the sight
And company of men.’ ”

"Were this only the first year of that sad catastrophe," I replied, "the reason might suffice; but even Olivia, it should appear, did not remain a recluse three years, nor even in her retirement abjure the sight, at least, of the proper man. In short, her grief was not confined to the loss of a brother. Here, therefore, there not only may be, but from Lady Hungerford's plain admission, there is a proper man. For the love of heaven, therefore," said I, "as well as for the effectual cure it will prove to myself, tell me if it is so. Once convinced that her affections are engaged, though to whom, in the recesses where she has so long been buried, it would puzzle a magician to discover, I shall far sooner recover my senses, than under the impression that her heart is still virgin."

Granville smiled, but I never liked him so little as in his reply.

For, far from endeavouring to calm the agitation in which he saw me, he coolly observed, that if Lady Hungerford had plainly admitted it, I wanted no further proof.

“ You are unkind, Granville,” said I.

“ We shall be too late for Lord Castleton’s,” replied he, and left me to dress.

It was plain to me that he knew more than he chose to reveal, and at the moment I hated him for it.

CHAPTER XVI.

MORE OF SOCIETY ; AND OF TWO NOBLE PERSONS I MEET WITH AT LORD CASTLETON’S.

Or else a feast,
And takes away the stomach ; such are the rich,
That have abundance, and enjoy it not.

SHAKSPEARE.—2 *Henry IV.*

You must consider that a prodigals’ course
Is like the sun’s, but not like his, recoverable.

Timon of Athens.

AFTER all, there is an elasticity of mind attendant upon a young gentleman of three-and-twenty, who has little upon his conscience, who has experienced no great misfortune, but who, on the contrary, views the world in all the prodigality of hope, for which kings and emperors might wisely exchange their diadems. Heaven be thanked, this is not confined to any particular condition of life, but is equally enjoyed by the prince and the peasant ; for it is the gift of the Author of nature to all his creatures who know how to use it. Happy are they with whom it lasts longer than the age I have mentioned.

From some of the guests I met at Lord Castleton’s on the day I am now commemorating, if ever they had possessed it, it had long fled with their years, and, unfortunately, had not been replaced by any other blessings, such as I had met with in Manners.

The agitation I had undergone was at least not new : it had often risen and subsided, and I was not so absorbed by it, as not to make one or two of these characters my particular study. They were living proofs that neither rank nor wealth, and certainly not abilities, can command “ our being’s end and aim,”—happiness.

This being a speculation I was always fond of, by degrees the absorption of my mind yielded before it ; and, though the thought of company, when I wished to be a hermit, had at first revolted me,

the company in which I found myself, at length diverted and engaged much of my attention. There was indeed no illustrious Paragraph to amuse by his empty effrontery ; but there was that happy mixture of the distinguished of the land for high rank and good-breeding with those celebrated for talent and good-humour, in which my patron, “in his happier hour,” used frequently to indulge his fine mind.

Two persons in particular, from what I had often heard of their history, though I had never seen them before, struck me as subjects for a philosopher of the world, which, as the pupil of Fothergill and Manners, notwithstanding my insignificance, I pretended (to myself, at least) to be. These were Lord Felix,—worthless in himself, but a minion of fortune ; and the Marquess of Rochfort, valuable in himself,—but the victim of self-will.

Lord Felix seemed to have been born and to have lived one of those indices marked out by Providence, to shew how utterly inadequate are the gifts of fortune, unaccompanied by the true knowledge of their usefulness, to produce happiness in one’s self, or esteem in others. He was profuse without being generous ; luxurious without comfort ; proud without self-respect. He had no capacity, and if ambitious, it was therefore in little things. His wealth might have given him influence in the state, or secured him the blessings of a thousand followers ; but he preferred frittering it away upon gilt plate, gilt coaches, trappings of horses, and laced liveries. If his dinners were the theme of praise for the exquisiteness of their cookery, their unseasonable delicacies, and the raciness of his wines, his elation was at its highest ; but he shewed little choice in the selection of his guests, and his carnal feasts were any thing but those of reason.

The consequence was, that Lord Felix was generally surrounded by parasites, who paid him with open flattery and secret contempt. His house was a magazine of costly antiques, marbles, models, and expensive, but not the best paintings ; and his library made a scholar’s mouth water ; but the poor gentleman, wholly without knowledge, though expensively educated, and twice experienced in the tour of Europe, knew nothing of these things, and he entertained a librarian and a foreign virtuoso for the express purpose of explaining what he could not explain himself to those who came to see him.

Nothing pleased Lord Felix more than to be asked the value of what his town house contained ; and the affected carelessness, but real complacency, with which he answered, “he believed about one hundred and fifty thousand pounds,” shewed the whole length, and breadth, and depth of his mind.

With all this, he was no patron of the arts, no contributor to the

success of public institutions, or the relief of private distress. In short, he imitated the waste, but not the generosity of the unhappy Timon.

But as Lord Felix scarcely ever met with a disappointment in life, could it be that he was not what his name imported, happy?

Whatever he had been in his youth, when accumulating what I have described, he certainly was not so now. For, far advanced in age, excitement, and with it, occupation, was gone; and having no real resources, no mental pleasures, he became a burthen to himself in the hour of loneliness, and, unequal to enlightened companions, was left to the purchased attentions of interested hangers-on.

From this his only relief was the banquet and dissipation, though even these were beyond his bodily strength. The moment of dinner, and the company it assembled, was, however, the great moment of the day, for it took him out of himself; and as his high quality obtained him admittance everywhere, for the same reason, tottering as he was with age, he visited the midnight assembly or ball-room, when all his spirits were exhausted, and he was fitted only for bed.

What was worse, if he slept not when there, he had no consolation; for, long past the age of man, any hour of the day or night (and he both knew and feared it) might bring him his summons; and when pale Death, who, without Horace's authority for it, we know beats equally at the door of the palace and the cottage¹, should knock at his, his laced porter could not tell him his lordship was "not at home." This affected him; for his kingdom was of *this* world, and a voice had certainly "fallen from heaven," telling him that that kingdom had departed².

In this trial he had no consolation from religion; for of religion, amidst his splendour, he had never found it necessary to think. He knew nothing of himself but what other people told him; and, struck with his display, or seduced by interest, they told him many a falsehood. The very best of them flattered themselves in flattering him. His nod, backed by his riches, gave them importance; and this nod could only be obtained by adulation.

With all his profusion, as he had never been munificent; he had not even the comfort which the "good old Erle of Devonschire" recorded on his tomb:

"What I spent, that I had;
What I gave, that I *have*."

¹ "Pallida mors æquo pulsat pede," etc.

² "While the word was in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, saying, O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken, the kingdom is departed from thee."

Daniel, iv. 31.

In short, he was a sad example of the apothegm of Seneca :

“ Illi mors gravior incubat,
Qui notus nimis omnibus,
Ignotus moritur sibi .”

The other living proof I have mentioned—that high station and apparent prosperity by no means carry happiness along with them—was exhibited, to the great regret of those who knew him well, by the Marquess of Rochfort. He was a nobleman of very superior character, and of higher rank, though much less wealth, than Lord Felix.

That his wealth, indeed, was greatly inferior to what his rank and ambition required, had plunged him into difficulties which never left him during life. But this was the least cause of his chagrin ; for he was of a very high and towering spirit, which neither rank nor wealth could satisfy, without power and popularity ; and power and popularity were (I know not why, for he was eminently able, and generous to profusion) always denied him.

Without success in these, his very ability and prominence in every thing else, whether in political knowledge, in the arts and liberal studies, or a very general information, and above all, the sacrifices he made for popularity in vain, were only a source of mortification to him, which he could not disguise.

Conscious of his endowments, his object was high office, through the *public* voice rather than private influence ; and while he could not obtain it, he daily saw quieter and more ordinary men, confessedly his inferiors, preferred before him.

This embittered his private moments ; and though, from a wish to appear above it, he indulged in a display of liveliness, anecdote, and conversational gaiety, which made him, perhaps naturally, the most agreeable man in England, yet his spirit was evidently tinged with an inward gloom, which preyed upon him in secret, and instead of being the cheerful companion in society, enjoyed by all, which he might have been, he was soured into a captious and unpleasant satirist, loved by few.

Yet Lord Rochfort had some noble qualities. Though violent when opposed, he was easily appeased, could generously forgive, and never deserted or changed a friend. On the contrary, he was distinguished as a most kind patron, and often obtained advancement for his *protégés*, which he failed in achieving for himself. At the same time, his noblest, but (unchecked as it was by prudence) his most unfortunate propensity, a generosity, profuse even

“ Death hangs with greater terror over him, who, known too much to the world, dies unknown to himself.”

to madness, had brought his fortunes low, though he would not confess it, even to himself ; for he had the soul of a prince, and thought himself and lived like one, reckless of consequences.

Every year added to his embarrassments, and told him a tale, which he would not believe, spite of his steward. Vehement in every thing, whether as to opinions or conduct, it was dreadful to see a man of his mind and parts so absolutely ruined, from the want of that common sense without which parts and mind only hasten destruction.

He was eaten up by numerous retainers, which, being the representative of many great feudal families, he thought it was a sort of duty to their memory to maintain in idleness. He had more than one castle, with all royalties attached ; to keep up which in almost pristine waste, he sacrificed uselessly one-half of his revenues. With nothing like their means, but with a view to popularity, he emulated the feasts and pageants of his ancestors ; nor, though he was yearly poorer and poorer, would he reduce the scale of his magnificent benefactions and costly compliments to those he often feasted, from royalty down to his country neighbours.

His real charities, too, for which he had a hand open as day, his pensions to decayed families, support to relations, subscriptions to all great institutions, presents to artists, and gallantries to lady friends in jewels and ornaments—all these were, like Anthonio's losses,

“ Enough to press a royal merchant down.”

But the very suspicion of this neutralized all his sacrifices to obtain that consequence and power for which in part he made them ; and to his mortification he found, that to ruin himself made no way with either the court or the people.

A magnificence which it was thought could not continue was slighted, though for a time its benefits were accepted. He was sometimes even thwarted, or not supported, by those whom his liberality had fed, or his attentions flattered ; and he discovered in the language of Johnson, on the character of his prototype Timon, that he had scattered bounty, but conferred no benefit, and bought flattery, but not friendship.

All this had at last its usual effect—he thought himself ill-used by his fellow-men, and shewed strong symptoms of cynicism. He did not absolutely hate mankind, but he often shunned them, and suspecting everybody's motives, felt a canker at his heart, which, even under the show of hilarity, was detected in a moment.

No ; the Marquess of Rochfort, any more than Lord Felix, was not happy.

These two noble persons engaged all my attention, as I have said, at the dinner I am recording at Lord Castleton's. For, as I had heard everywhere of Lord Felix's grandeur and luxury, surpassing all modern and almost equalling all antient story, I expected something of superior mark in his physiognomy, manner, and conversation.

Nothing like it. A little, shrivelled old man, with a dead eye, which never could have been lively; an almost mean person, not at all relieved, but rather the contrary, by a broad red ribbon, characterized his outward man; and as to the inner, as far as it could be collected from conversation, to discuss the merits of the cookery, and the embossed plate, which he did Lord Castleton the honour of saying was next to his own in magnificence, was all we could gather of what his mind or opinions were upon any subject: for, except greedily to devour venison, and swallow repeated glasses of champagne, as if it was an elixir on which his life depended, he scarcely opened his mouth. He chuckled a little, indeed, at some of Lord Rochfort's satirical sallies; which induced the latter to say (aside) to Lord Castleton, that if Felix had not the wit to *say* ill-natured things himself, he could, at least, enjoy them from others.

A discussion now commencing between Lord Rochfort and Granville, on some point of taste in gothic architecture, occasioned by a visit they had made that morning to Strawberry Hill,—after saying the house was a mere piece of lath and plaster frippery, not fit for a gentleman to live in, Lord Felix fell asleep.

"Peace to his manes!" said Lord Rochfort, who had no respect for him.

"Why, he is not dead," observed Granville.

"No; but he is buried, which is the next best thing," said his lordship.

The conversation, as it proceeded, afforded room for a little more of the marquess's spleen, in which he did not spare any one who was brought to his notice.

A late minister (Lord Heavitree) being named, who was little famous for his knowledge of state affairs, and who had lately resigned, Lord Rochfort proposed his health, adding, with ironical gravity, a wish for Lord Castleton's sake, that he had remained in the cabinet.

Lord Castleton looked grave, not liking the conversation; but Granville asking his reason for the wish, he observed that a British minister ought, like Cæsar, to have about him none but fat colleagues, like Lord Heavitree,

"Sleek-headed men, and such as sleep o'nights;"

not those who, like Cassius, have

"A lean and hungry look, and think too much.
Such men are dangerous."

This sally produced a laugh, in which all joined but the noble host, who endeavoured to restrain his satirical guest, but without success. For being *en verve*, and not in good humour at Lord Heavitree's place being filled up by a young orator, who had given the highest promise of the consummate ability he afterwards displayed, and who was remarkably thin, he jestingly reproached Lord Castleton, for permitting such an appointment ; and pursuing the comparison he had begun with in a sort of paraphrase, said to him,

“ I do not know the man you should avoid
So much as that spare William. He reads much,
He is a great observer, and he looks
Quite through the deeds of men ; he loves no plays,
As thou dost, Granville. He hears no music.
Such a man as he be never at heart's ease,
And therefore are they very dangerous.”

Lord Castleton himself could not help joining in the laugh which this produced.

A very dull speaker in the House being then mentioned, somebody wondered how it was that people could listen to him.

“ Why, not to mention its being a capital exercise of patience,” said Lord Rochfort, “ it is one of ‘ the pleasures of hope ; ’ one keeps hoping that every sentence will be his last. Just as our friend Gloomly,” added he, “ never fails to gratify every company into which he goes—that is, at the moment when he gets up to go away.”

Here one of the company expressing surprise at a celebrated literary peer being married to so silly a wife—

“ Silly, do you call her ? ” said Lord Rochfort ; “ I declare I always thought her a very sensible woman, for the only thing I ever heard her say was, that she wondered what anybody could find to admire in her lord's writings.”

Lord Castleton now complained of a busy public character, the Earl of ———, who was as mischievous, he said, as his understanding would allow him to be.

“ If that be all the mischief there is in him,” said Lord Rochfort, “ he'll never do harm to anybody.”

Granville then turned the discourse upon a very voluble member, just come into Parliament, who was perpetually talking on all sorts of subjects. “ In fact,” said Granville, “ he seems to know every thing.”

“ Every thing,” observed Lord Rochfort, “ except how to hold his tongue.”

Being then asked how Lord B., a great miser, lately dead, had

left his fortune, he said he had bequeathed every thing to his wife, even his crabbed temper and his avarice.

After this Granville expressed surprise that such a run was made by Paragraph in his paper against poor Sir Job Prosser (whom the marquess called Sir Job Proser), an inoffensive man, though a would-be politician and author, whose only fault was a little vanity.

“Depend upon it,” said the marquess, “they understand each other. Sir Job is rich, and he has made it worth Paragraph’s while to abuse him; for Paragraph’s abuse is worth paying for, though his praise is not.”

In this style, but in spirits evidently forced, he ran on, to the amusement of us all, except Lord Castleton himself, who seemed to lament what he thought this distortion of mind, though in every thing he shewed Lord Rochfort the greatest consideration.

I wondered; for with all this, his personal manner was of great good-nature, though he spared no one, and, like Jacques,

“Thus most invectively he pierced through
The body of the country, city, court.”

CHAPTER XVII.

MORE OF LORD ROCHFORD, TO WHOM I AM SENT ON A MISSION INTO NORTHUMBERLAND.—I AM FULL OF AMBITION, BUT FORGET IT BY AN INCIDENT IN YORKSHIRE, WHICH REVIVES ANOTHER PASSION.

Flaminius.—No care! no stop! so senseless of expense,
That he will neither know how to maintain it,
Nor cease his flow of riot!

1st Lord.—Come, shall we in,
And taste Lord Timon’s bounty?

2nd Lord.—He pours it out. Plutus, the god of gold,
Is but his steward.

SHAKSPEARE.—*Timon of Athens.*

SOON after this dinner at Lord Castleton’s, Lord Felix died, leaving not a single regret behind, except among his tradesmen; a sad memorial of the vanity of riches.

Lord Rochfort did not die; better, perhaps, if he had, rather than live to eat his heart, and waste his substance; proving not only the same vanity of riches, but also the insufficiency of abilities and accomplishments, however great, to procure whatever *summum bonum* we propose to ourselves.

As Lord Rochfort was frequently at Lord Castleton’s, I had a full

opportunity of knowing him. Vehemence, and the carrying every feeling, and even opinion, to extremity, though little persisted in, were his distinguishing features.

I cannot say he was "stiff in opinions," for he frequently changed them ; nor "always in the wrong," for his penetration often proved him right ; but whatever he was bent upon, he was headlong in pursuing. Shining, too, was necessary to him, whether in public or private, and he exemplified what was said of Wharton :—

" Though listening senates hung on all he spoke,
The club must hail him master of the joke."

This versatility and this vehemence, conjoined, were, however, next to his imprudence, his greatest enemies.

Yet Lord Castleton had so high an opinion of Lord Rochfort, as a man of genius and commanding talent, and, in fact, bore him such great good-will as a friend, that I expected daily to see a closer union between them in politics. In this I was disappointed ; for though, supported by the whole strength of Lord Castleton, who deemed him, in point of ability, equal to all the rest of the ministers put together, his advancement was opposed by them all, for reasons drawn from the character I have described ; and as their influence in Parliament was great, however wanting individually in talent, my patron was forced to yield.

Thus, a seal seemed set upon Lord Rochfort's peculiar ambition, which was to influence Europe, and *direct* the counsels of his sovereign, not to vegetate on any thing subordinate, however lucrative or splendid. Hence, though every thing short of the cabinet had been offered him—the great court offices, Ireland, and even India—he had refused them all ; and then, from indignation at his disappointments, or, as he called them, his affronts, he would be all for renouncing a rascally world—would declaim against riches, and be ready, in a fit of temperance,

" To feed on pulse."

In these capricious moments it was in vain to expect any consistency from him ; for, flying from politics, and even society, he would for a week or two shut himself up in the country, and swear that there was no happiness to be found in grandeur, but only in retreat and moderation.

Why he failed in his greater object, was a problem to most, but was attributed by Granville to his dictatorial as well as satirical temper, not at all softened by a consciousness of his superiority to others. Not only the ministry, but the sovereign himself, was afraid of him for this.

Yet he was too valuable an ally to slight, and no man received more personal attentions from the highest characters at home and abroad. Alas! this only hastened his ruin; for in this not only the magnificence of his disposition found greater cause for display, but he made it a sort of point of honour to indulge it to the utmost, in order to shew how far his personal consequence was above what he called the injustice of the world.

Foreign as well as native princes were his frequent guests; the splendour of his house and housekeeping was increased; his kitchen rivalled that of the king; and the Greek physician, who visited Anthony's at Alexandria, and came away astonished, though he might not have seen eight wild boars roasting for one supper¹, yet would have blessed himself at the profusion of the English nobleman.

Being a colonel in the army, he thought it was no more than became him, on the king's birth-day, to give dinners to his whole regiment, not only officers and men, but their wives and children, to the amount of near a thousand souls; and from this feast no officer's lady retired without an expensive present.

The subject of presents, indeed, occasioned sad reminiscences; for, emulating the magnificent customs of Spain, if a person of consequence professed great admiration of any particular valuable, of the many Lord Rochfort possessed, it was sent to him as a gift; while a gift made to himself was returned a hundred-fold. Thus the ambassador of France, having presented him with a plume of feathers, worn, *it was said*, by Henri Quatre, a picture of Titian, which the ambassador had admired, and which had cost many hundred pounds, was sent him in return. The pounds had not been paid out of current income, but capital; but the reputation of the marquess was highly raised by this trait of *grandeur d'ame*, at the court of Versailles.

This, and other instances of the same kind made Lord Castleton, who lamented the evident consequences of such prodigality, tremble for his friend, with whom he remonstrated upon its imprudence, but in vain. It was hence that Lord Castleton used to compare him, as well as Lord Felix (though for very different reasons), to Timon of Athens, particularly in that description of him, which he said he so resembled, that he thought he must have sat for it—

“ If I want gold, steal but a beggar's dog,
And give it Timon, why, the dog coins gold :
If I would sell my horse, and buy twenty more
Better than he, why, give my horse to Timon ;
Ask nothing ; *give* it him, it foals me, straight,

¹ See Plutarch's *Vit. Anton.*

And able horses. No porter at his gate,
But rather one that smiles, and still invites
All that pass by."

"It is, indeed, lamentable," observed Granville, who heard Lord Castleton make this remark, "to see those fine qualities which raise him so much above other men—genius, integrity, spirit, eloquence, and penetrating judgment in every thing but what concerns himself—all thrown away, from the mere want of what no man so low but he may possess it—prudence. For, pursuing your comparison out of the same scene you have cited, I fear the time fast approaches when, if

'Every feather sticks in his own wing,
Lord Timon will be left a naked gull,
Which flashes now a phoenix.'"

"It is certain," said Lord Castleton, in reply, "that with the vehemence and energy of Cardinal de Retz, he has all his recklessness as to money, when, on being reproached with his debts, the Cardinal said, 'Cæsar, at my age, owed more.'"

"I have heard," remarked Granville, "that it is this that disinclines the king to him; at least the *on dit* says that formerly, when there was a question of placing him at the Treasury, his majesty, with characteristic terseness, replied, 'What, trust him with my money, when he cannot take care of his own! No, no; that won't do.'"

Lord Castleton, though in a grave humour, prompted by the subject, could not help smiling at this, and rallied Granville upon his gossiping anecdote; which, however, he owned, though it might be false, was very well got up, for it was quite in character.

Some time after this conversation, I had an opportunity of seeing many of these traits realized in this remarkable, and, in many respects, superior person; for Lord Castleton's melancholy prognostics were sooner realized than he had expected. Execution after execution was levied in his houses both in town and country, and the further dissipation of his fortune by presents or other magnificence was effectually prevented.

This was hard to bear by one of his turn; but it was made worse by the falling off of almost all his followers, who, as he could no longer feast them, no longer flattered him. Lord Castleton did what he could to soften his reverse, by endeavouring to persuade him to accept the richest of the governments abroad which happened to be vacant; but with proud obstinacy he refused, still asserting his claims to one of the highest seats in the cabinet, glancing at his following in the House of Commons, which *had been* not incon-

siderable. But, to his dismay and eternal mortification, the two or three members who owed their seats to him, and the whole of the small party which had hitherto acknowledged him as their leader, refused to follow him any longer, and gave their unqualified support to the government.

This disappointment cankered his heart, and, like many other disappointed politicians, he renounced the world, and fled away in earnest, to nurse his resentment in solitude; not now, as it had sometimes been before, in his country palace a short distance from London, but in an ancient and unvisited old border castle in the extremity of the north, called Belford Tower.

This betokened a more permanent resolve than usual, and from this place his letters to Lord Castleton, the only one of the ministry with whom he kept terms, breathed nothing but misanthropy, though he softened it by calling them essays *de contemptu mundi*.

Lord Castleton had attempted, for many months, to recal him, in vain; and at length, still anxious for his active support, particularly on measures then pending, to which there was a very threatening opposition, and upon which he was particularly well informed, he resolved to lay the whole government scheme before him, in all its details, declaring they looked upon him as their chief ally. He added his firm promise to renew his endeavours to overcome the repugnance of some of his colleagues to act with him in the cabinet, and particularly of a duke minister, whom Lord Rochfort considered as much his inferior, but to whom, from his personal court favour, not only he chiefly attributed his exclusion, but accused him of having undermined him with the sovereign.

This offer, Lord Castleton thought, would be the most powerful appeal he could make to him; and as, though ruined, he was still far too high a person to be addressed on such a matter by letter, through a common state messenger, he resolved to send his own secretary, as more becoming the importance of the mission. Accordingly, after being closeted upon it several hours, and furnished with all requisite information both in regard to the subject and the character and former history of the marquess, I was detached on this important embassy.

This attempt at conciliation, and the reasons for selecting *me* to conduct it, as more reverential and complimentary towards the person to be conciliated, gave me a lesson in party politics which opened new views to me, both as to men and things. Granville congratulated me upon it, as a proof of my advancing fortune under Lord Castleton; and that notion, spite of all resolves, was always closely united to the idea of her whom, for the fiftieth time, I had renounced.

Be this as it might, Granville's intimation was by no means lost

upon me; for though I was still possessed by a hopeless attachment, yet I felt more and more that it was hopeless, and this left room for ambition to expand itself. The sanguine temper, therefore, of a young mind, obtained its usual play on this commission of Lord Castleton, and the views of futurity which it gave me much enlivened my journey, at least as far as Ferry-bridge : for there, even without an important incident that occurred, my thoughts would have taken a far different range.

I certainly did not, as formerly, quit the old road to York, for the sake of a *more picturesque country and a finer view of the river*¹; but as I got into the latitude of Foljambe, I found my eyes invariably glancing to the left, and my heart beat high, and palpitated more violently than I wished, when I read on a direction-post at the end of a lane, "The cross-road to Foljambe."

At that moment a carriage, of foreign, and, as I thought, German make, came rattling up, the horses of which were from the same house as mine, but the postillion, who had been lately hired, beckoned his fellow-whip, who drove me, to stop, in order to put him in the right road to Foljambe.

"You should have turned to the left on leaving the bridge," said my boy, "and you will scarcely make out the cross-road."

To make things sure, therefore, the boys asked permission to exchange jobs, which was granted by me, and the gentleman of the foreign carriage, who I now perceived, by his air, was a man of very distinguished manner and countenance. He seemed about five-and-twenty, and wore a laced manteau, and cap of handsome sable. The arms on his carriage were of many quarterings, and the shield containing them was borne on the breast of a black eagle, spreading over the whole pannel.

When the boys had changed, and the foreign carriage had moved on, I naturally asked my driver if he knew who the gentleman was whom he had been driving. Think of my surprise, I might say my agitation, when he told me, upon the information of his valet, that he was a German prince, and cousin to a *sort* of king.

"Good heavens!" I involuntarily exclaimed, "and do you know his name?"

"I cannot pernounce it," said the boy, mounting his horse, "but it was something about Sacks, and something else which I cannot remember."

"Was it Saxe Eisenach?" asked I, with agitation.

"That were like it," answered the postillion, and flourishing his whip, the chaise moved on.

"Good heavens!" again cried I—"he is her cousin, and is

¹ See Vol. I., p. 103.

going to enjoy her society in the ease of family intimacy ;” and I threw myself back in my chaise, with I know not what forebodings.

My reverie upon this lasted many minutes ; when reason recovering, I rallied and asked myself—why not? Why should not the most natural thing in the world, a visit from a near relation, take place? But above all, what was it to me? O! but he was so handsome, so striking in his manner, so well dressed! Well, and again, what was that to me?

Alas! I did not like to answer the question. Yet, having asked, I wished to answer it with—“nothing”—but the word, like the Amen of Macbeth, stuck in my throat.

I tried to rouse myself, but conjecture upon conjecture pressed upon me all the way to York. My mission, Lord Rochfort, and Lord Castleton himself, were forgotten, and I could think of nothing but Bertha and her handsome cousin—a prince, too!

Was I relieved when I got to York? Let those answer who have ever felt the pangs of, what I thought, despised love, made sharper by jealousy.

On going to the coffee-room to order a mutton chop, and see the London papers, just come in, the first thing I read was the following among the arrivals :—“Prince Adolphus of Saxe Eisenach, who immediately took post for Yorkshire, it is said, upon a very tender errand, as a treaty of marriage with his cousin, Miss Hastings, the beautiful heiress of Foljambe Park, has long been on the tapis.”

The paper fell from my hands. I turned pale, and was seized with tremor. O! how well was I cured!

When I recovered from the shock, I consoled myself in the only manner by which I could be consoled. I would not believe it. How was it possible that this could be, and I not informed of it? Could Granville or Lady Hungerford not know it? Alas! I thought they did know it, though they refused to communicate it to me, thinking perhaps that ignorance was bliss; and hence, at once, the solution of the mystery I had so often endeavoured to get them to disclose.

And yet it could not be concealed, and therefore why not tell it? Here was another doubt. But again, on the other hand, what so likely? The connection and intercourse always kept up; the engraving of the young hussar, and his coat armour, hung in the place of honour, in Bertha’s summer-house at Foljambe; the packet from Prince Adolphus, which Bertha took from her father when I was last at the park; the mutual advantages of the match; the probable wishes, and perhaps dying injunctions, of Bertha’s mother; and above all, the seeming personal merit of the young prince—Oh! how were not the heart and head made the sport of all these contending arguments!

belonging to it ; but the other was such a volume of Billingsgate, as almost put me to flight. There were ranged in order, under the head of Epithets, ‘ fool, dolt, bæotian, worm, spider, carrion,—ravings, brayings, slaver—mendacious, mare’s nest, pickthank, toad-eater, lickspittle.’

“ This you would think enough ; but these were single epithets. There were, therefore, compounds, or a kind of half-sentences, as ‘ insane and silly being ; bloated mass of self-conceit ; absurdity and insolence ; pitiful piece of puling ; consummate arrogance ; debility of understanding, and feebleness of genius ; abominable egotism and dogmatism’.”

“ This was for any persons who presumed to laugh at Mr. Sourkrout, of whom, to his astonishment, there were not a few.

“ Then came whole sentences, ready cut and dried. ‘ No knowledge of facts ; style below mediocrity ; dull details ; not a spark of enlightened thought ; totally ignorant of the spirit of the age ; behind it by at least a hundred years.’”

“ This was for historical writers.

“ Then followed ‘ bigot, zealot, reverend blockhead, inquisitor, burnings in Smithfield, intolerance, ignorance, those old women the Fathers ; dreams, hypocrisy, mammon of bishops ;’ in short, *odium theologicum* in all its details.

“ This was for divines.

“ Then again, ‘ Incapable of drawing a character ; has seen no life, and not able to describe it if he had ; fails in his heroines ; has no knowledge of the heart, like Richardson ; of manners, like Fielding ; of pathos, like Sterne ; or of the world at large, like Le Sage.’

“ This for the novelists.

“ There were also some general maxims in the form of memorandums, very useful as a key, and also to prevent getting into scrapes. For example :

“ Mem. 1st.—‘ If the author not patronized by our shop, or not of our party in politics or religion, should the work be favoured by the town, and too good to pull to pieces, find what fault you can with small things, confine yourself to generals, and *leave out all the chief scenes and characters.*’

“ Mem. 2nd.—‘ If you criticize a particular word, always look into Johnson first, for fear you should be wrong ; but if, for want of this, you should be proved guilty of ignorance yourself, never retract ; and if in any of your assertions you are convicted of a lie,

‘ You may doubt, reader, but in this polite age, all these epithets are to be found in one or other of the daily, weekly, monthly, or quarterly literary press. Yet these are from the pens of scholars and the liberally educated. No doubt, as the writers are men who think they have the learning of Scaliger, they would prove it by imitating his temper and elegance. “ *Stercus diaboli*,” and “ *lutum stercore maceratum*,” were some of his phrases towards those he attacked.

repeat it, and you are safe. Besides, nobody knows who you are, so you fight comfortably behind a wall.'

"Mem. 3rd.—'If you write against a critic of another concern, remember he has no resources, no independence of his own, but is a bookseller's hack; a venal scribe; a tool, *et cætera*. If against a lawyer, be sure to quote Cicero, '*leguleius, præco actionum, cantor formularum, anceps syllabarum*;' and give a proper sprinkling of pettifogger, special pleader, Old Bailey counsel, sharp practice, and the like.'"

"If all this be correct," observed I, "it is systematic with a vengeance."

"Yes," replied Granville; "and so far do they carry it, that once being in Sourkrout's parlour, one of his writers came in, in a hurry, with his pen behind his ear, evidently big with composition. Taking me perhaps for a brother journeyman, and going doggedly on with his work, he asked abruptly whether Mr. Fairchild, whose book was to be cut up, was thick or thin?"

"O, very thin," replied Sourkrout, laughing.

"That's enough," said the scribe, and immediately disappeared. I was completely lost at this; till, upon questioning him, Sourkrout informed me that thick or thin alluded to the skin of the author, which it was necessary to know, because the *personal* notice of him was to be manufactured accordingly. 'For there are some of these fellows,' said Sourkrout, 'who are as tough as alligators; others as soft as wool-packs. You may fire shot at the one, and not penetrate; or beat the other with a club, and he will shrink, but always puffs out again as much as before. You may as well beat a carpet.'

"I think," concluded Granville, "I have now let you sufficiently into the nature of some, at least, of these guiders of the public taste, who have the curse of Ishmael upon them; for their hand is against every man, and every man's hand against them. Like chimney-sweepers, too, the more dirt they rake together, the more happy they are."

"A charming lesson," said I, "by which, if ever I turn author, I hope to profit. But are all of this description?"

"God forbid," replied he; "for I could name, and have introduced you to several whose candour and good manners are equal to their abilities."

"But is there no chastising such nuisances?" asked I.

"Yes; for an illiberal critic is always as thin-skinned as Mr. Fairchild himself. Flog him, therefore, with his own rod—that is, review his review—and he will whine like a hyæna, or squeak like a pig; particularly if he be an author himself, and you review him in your turn. No one is then so sore; not Sir Fretful himself; and he will go whining about the town, wondering what can have oc-

casioned him so many enemies. This, however, is rare, because he generally conceals his identity under the royal term *WE*, while the honest author is forced, for the most part, to present himself *in puris naturalibus*¹."

All this astonished me. I owned my notion both of the character and consequence of a critic was incorrect, and was no longer surprised at the sort of subdued, but ill-concealed hatred which we see entertained towards some of these self-elected censors in society, over which, whenever they appear, they seem to throw a wet blanket.

"You, therefore," said Granville, "ought to feel yourself the more fortunate in finding, from those to whom I have introduced you, that there can be critics who are not slanderous, and who may be judges of literature without ceasing to be gentlemen."

"Those you allude to," said I, "are undoubtedly of that sort: Mr.—, for example, seems to justify the account of rational and just criticism given by Pope:

'The *generous* critic fann'd the poet's fire,
And taught the world with reason to admire;
Then Criticism the Muse's handmaid proved,
To dress her charms, and make her more beloved.'

"Good," observed Granville. "But even Pope says that many of these critics were soon corrupted; and you should have gone on with your quotation:

'But following wits from that intention stray'd,
Who could not win the mistress, woo'd the *maid*;
Against the poets their own arms they turn'd—
Sure to hate most the men from whom they learn'd.'

"But why hate?" asked I. "That is the question I should like to have solved."

"It is solvable," said Granville, "by the one single word *CONTEMPORARY*. People in general do not hate the dead; nor even the living, when removed from the sphere of rivalry or adverse interest. Criticism, *then*, is prompted by a real love and taste for literature, and a real desire to promote its interests. At any rate, the critics have no wish to exhibit any one *but* the author. A modern reviewer, of the character we have been investigating, whatever his

¹ See the subject of anonymous criticism ably and pungently treated by Sir E. L. Bulwer, in his *England and the English*, Book IV.

"There are only two classes of men," says this observing essayist, "to whom the anonymous is really desirable. The perfidious gentleman, who fears to be cut by the friend he injures (to which it might have added, who fears for his own works), and the lying blackguard, who dreads to be horsewhipt by the man he maligns."

Pity that Sir Edward is able to support the first part of this observation by the example of a highly-gifted nobleman, one of whose best compositions, he says, was discovered in a review to be a most truculent attack upon his intimate companion.

taste for literature, is chiefly swayed by his personal feeling in regard to the writer; the interest he chiefly espouses is that of the shop; and the person he most wishes to exhibit is—himself¹.”

These observations of Granville, the result of much experience, as well as natural sagacity, to say nothing of an enviable *sang-froid*, which enabled him to judge without passion the most passionate set of people in the world, did me a great deal of good; or rather would have done it, had I continued inclined to turn either author or critic. In fact, however, I had not time for either; for all reading and writing was absorbed by official papers².

¹ In the same spirit with this remark, the acute and thinking Lord Dudley (himself a reviewer) says, in one of his letters to the Bishop of Llandaff, recently published, “If any branch of the public administration were as ‘*infamously jobbed*’ as the *Reviews*, it must soon fall a victim to the just indignation of the world.” See also an able pamphlet called, “*Reviewers Reviewed*,” by Mr. O’Reid. “Literature itself,” he states, “*interests but few, though it employs so many more. Its honours are degraded; its pleasures are but little understood; it has assumed a commercial character, and is esteemed in this light. It has fallen a prey to criticism.*”

² Though Granville having finished his strictures, I will not add to them in his own name, I cannot help here recollecting the sharp cutting-knife of a most trenchant, though a less polished person than Lady Hungerford’s admirer; and as there are malignant and ignorant critics, as well as fair and learned ones, while I honour the *latter*, I would address to the *former* what Swift says of their mother, in the “*Battle of the Books*.” It will wind up the subject excellently well:—

“Meanwhile Momus, fearing the worst, and calling to mind an ancient prophecy, which bore no very good face to his children the moderns, bent his flight to the region of a malignant deity, called *Criticism*. She dwelt on the top of a snowy mountain in Nova Zembla: there Momus found her extended in her den, upon the spoils of numberless volumes, half devoured. At her right hand sat Ignorance, her father and husband, blind with age; at her left, Pride, her mother, dressing her up in the scraps of paper herself had torn. There was Opinion, her sister, light of foot, hood-winked and headstrong, yet giddy and perpetually turning. About her played her children, Noise and Impudence, Dulness and Vanity, Positiveness, Pedantry, and Ill-manners. The goddess herself had claws like a cat; her head, and ears, and voice, resembled those of an ass; her teeth fallen out before; her eyes turned inward, as if she looked only upon herself; *her diet was the overflowing of her own gall*; and, what is wonderful to conceive, the bulk of her spleen increased faster than the sucking of her children could diminish it.

“‘Goddess,’ said Momus, ‘can you sit idly here, while our devout worshippers, the moderns, are this minute entering into a cruel battle, and perhaps now lying under the swords of their enemies? Who, then, hereafter, will ever sacrifice or build altars to our divinities? Haste, therefore, to the British Isle, and, if possible, prevent their destruction; while I make factions among the gods, and gain them over to our party.’

“Momus having thus delivered himself, staid not for an answer, but left the goddess to her own resentment. Up she rose in a rage, and, as it is form on such occasions, began a soliloquy: ‘It is I,’ said she, ‘who give wisdom to infants and idiots; by me, children grow wiser than their parents; by me, beaux become politicians, and schoolboys judges of philosophy; by me, sophisters debate, and conclude upon the depths of knowledge; and coffee-house wits, instinct by me, can correct an author’s style, and display his minutest errors, without understanding a syllable of his matter, or his language; by me, striplings spend their judgment, as they do their estate, before it comes into their hands. It is I who have deposed wit and knowledge from their empire over poetry, and advanced myself in their stead. And shall a few upstart ancients dare oppose me? But come, my aged parents, and you, my children dear, and thou, my beauteous sister; let us ascend my chariot, and haste to assist our devout moderns, who are now sacrificing to us a hecatomb, as I perceive by the grateful smell, which from thence reaches my nostrils.’

“The goddess and her train, having mounted the chariot, which was drawn by tame geese, flew over infinite regions, shedding her influence in due places, till at length she arrived at her beloved island of Britain.”

SWIFT’S *Battle of the Books*. Works 2, 301.

CHAPTER XIV.

OF THE KIND CONSIDERATION OF LORD CASTLETON, AND THE PLEASANT REMEDY HE APPLIED TO AN INCIPIENT ILLNESS.—I MEET SIR HARRY MELFORD, AND MAKE A NEW AND INTERESTING ACQUAINTANCE.—EFFECTS OF A DISAPPOINTMENT IN LOVE ON DIFFERENT DISPOSITIONS.—QUESTIONS AS TO WHAT MAY BE ATTRIBUTED TO LOVE, WHAT TO PRIDE.

A babbled of green fields.

SHAKSPEARE.—*Henry V.*

O, what a noble mind is here o'erthrown!

Hamlet.

THE attention I gave to my official duties, partly from necessity, partly from taste, and greatly from the pleasure which I saw it gave Lord Castleton, had now become so intense, that a pale cheek and a bilious eye proved to my patron that I was overdone. Of this he was himself so guiltless, that he was the first to remark, with a view to relieve it; and, with the consideration that belonged to him, he said to me one day at the close of pressing business which had absorbed many hours, "Industry in an official can never be but valuable, and joined with talent must lead to fortune. But too much application may defeat itself. Lord Somers indeed, it is said, though a man of polite literature, at last came to like a statute at large as well as he ever did Homer or Virgil; and when another minister fainted away, it was proposed to burn an Act of Parliament under his nose, as the most certain remedy to recover him. But you are not yet so broke in to the trammels of business to feel like them. Perhaps you have come too early and suddenly into laborious office, to which, as to every thing, one ought to be trained; and, as a scholar, you must regret the opportunities you lose for liberal studies, which office seldom gives you time to pursue. Whatever small stock of them I myself possess, I laid in long before I became so actively employed; and though, sometimes, *vacare literis* is perhaps the best maxim a man of business, particularly of political business, can adopt, it is more wished for than enjoyed. We are so tied to the

'Fumum et opes strepitumque Romæ,'

and the

'Superba civium potentiorum limina,'

that we sigh for a little wholesome leisure to put our thoughts in order, and recover our classics. This we cannot do in

‘ The smoke and stir of this dim spot
Which men call London.’

I shall, therefore, instead of sending you to an apothecary, which I must if you stay here, send you to green fields, about which, you know even Falstaff babbled when he was ill and dying. Him, indeed, they did not recover, but you are not so far gone; so my orders to you for to-morrow, instead of the papers I gave you, are to set out for Windsor Forest.”

Struck with this kindness, he saw how it overjoyed me; and went on to say, “ Truth is, I have a letter from the excellent Manners, intimating that though he recommended you to me as a secretary, he did not design I should steal his pupil from him, or make you forget that there were other books besides those of the Privy Council, and other gardens besides Kensington; in short, Windsor Forest and the Grange. I would therefore advise you to go there now for a day or two; and, for some time to come, to make a regular citizen’s holiday of it, and go down to him every Saturday and Sunday; cultivate the muse, listen to his didactics (you may do a worse thing), or wander with him to the Warren House, and come back fresh to your task, which will then not operate as an opiate in regard to the *litteræ humaniores*.”

Nothing could fall in better with my own wishes than this considerate plan, which only added still more to my veneration for the accomplished nobleman who proposed it. It may be supposed I profited by it, and it had the effect of uniting me more than ever with one of the most rational guides and companions that a youth ever had. For by his knowledge of men and his knowledge of philosophy, Manners was a compound of Horace and Plato, to say nothing of his pastoral feelings, in those most pastoral of spots, Binfield, and Asher’s Wood. The remembrance is still green with me, as the woods themselves when clothed in all their honours, and this will account for the rapture I indulged, in a former chapter, when I hailed my first approach to Windsor Forest, as the seat of my happiest acquirements¹.

One effect of these country retirements was not only to relieve the waste of town occupations, but to give a greater zest to town society.

After all the fine things which retirement deserves to have said of it, particularly when sought in order to get acquainted with one’s self, its advantages are best brought to perfection by a collision

¹ See Vol. I., p. 304.

with other minds, which see things differently ; so that by viewing them in other lights and by other experiences, the prejudice and one-sidedness of solitude may be corrected, and more chance obtained of arriving at truth.

Hence Manners, often on my quitting him to return to town, used to say,

“ Go ; continue to observe, to note, and to remember ; lay in a fresh stock of materials, and come back with them, that we may examine their value, and turn them to shape.”

The thought of this made the opinions and manners I met with in London of more consequence than perhaps they otherwise would have been. Here my intimacy with Granville was very valuable, as a mean of introducing me to a greater variety of acquaintances than I could have otherwise achieved ; men of different complexions, the thinking as well as the careless, the theoretical, the practical, the strict, the loose ; and the collision, as I have called it, of all these, by always producing some addition to our stock of ideas, seldom failed to end in good.

For this purpose, though not, as I have stated, passing rich, Granville occasionally indulged himself in a little dinner society, where, though the treat was not extravagant, it was elegant, and though the company was not numerous, it was select.

Having engaged me one day to one of these parties, he surprised me by saying,

“ Among others, you will meet your old acquaintance, Sir Harry Melford.”

I almost started at that name, and felt a little alarmed, from old, and not over pleasant, associations. This I told Granville, but he answered,

“ Poor fellow ! you need not fear. You will meet a most altered creature. His gaiety, his good-breeding, and that air of decorous self-possession which generally gained him favour, are gone ; all changed into either a reckless tone of libertinism, or a sullenness, evidently from uneasiness of mind, which he in vain endeavours to conceal.”

I felt seriously sorry for this, and asked if there was any reason for it.

“ I can guess it,” said Granville, “ and have long lamented it ; for I have thought and still think him made for better things ; and as, if I am right as to the cause of it, it was a fellow-feeling with you of despair as to a certain lady, I can only felicitate you upon not being involved in the same consequences.”

This, as may be supposed, engaged all my interest, especially when he went on to tell me, that, soon after the final extinction of his hopes of Bertha, to recover himself, Melford went abroad, and

most mistakenly sought his cure in a career of unbridled dissipation, not to say libertine pleasures, and returned after a year's absence, with a woman, beautiful, clever, and accomplished indeed, but dissolute and desighing, and not even affording him the poor excuse, that she had sacrificed herself to him alone. In truth, though certainly very fascinating, she was a *femme aventurière*.

"You have seen her then?" said I.

"Yes; and with all her personal attractions, so evidently is she the cause of ruin to the originally fine mind of our friend, that I could not help hating her as much as I pitied him. That she had made him a father, by no means diminished the feeling of either one or the other. In a word, it was evident that she was making it instrumental to a design, which everybody could perceive but himself, to trepan him into marriage; and in the prospect of success in this, she had already become neglectful both of his comfort and the personal elegance to which she owed so much of her power.

"In truth," continued Granville, "soon after I first saw her, she seemed to have abandoned that minute attention to her dress and appearance which always goes for something with even an unworthy female, and actually shewed symptoms of a married slattern, who had relieved herself from the necessity of neatness. He saw it too, yet could not break his bonds. I wanted no other proof of his proximity to misery."

"This is a sad picture," said I. "Was it in his own house that you saw this? Had he gone such full length towards loss of character, as to take her home to him?"

"Why no; what I allude to was at an inn at Wetherby, where he had put up for the night. In his way, you know, he passed the gates of Foljambe, and his change of life since he had been received there under very different colours, made me mark the incident with more interest; for I was sent by my good uncle, who knew not this *liaison dangereuse*, to invite him to the park."

"And did he comply?"

"No; and it was his mode of receiving the invitation, and evident distress upon it, that told me the real state of his mind, however he may have disguised, or attempted to disguise it since."

"This opens a useful lesson," said I; "I should like to know the particulars."

"It was by chance," replied Granville, "from a call by your friend Sandford, that Mr. Hastings knew Sir Harry was on the road, and as he had never been at Foljambe, but studiously avoided it since his separation from Bertha, my uncle, out of his kindly nature, tried to tempt him to come and stay the night with him in preference to an inn, and with this view, as giving more weight to it, begged me to go over with the invitation.

“ I did so, and shall not soon forget the scene. Though the evening had not closed in, both Sir Harry and his mistress were in slippers and *robes de chambre*. The lady, all dishevelled, was trying, though angrily, to quiet her brat (who was squalling unmercifully), and scolding poor Sir Harry for accusing her of having ill-managed the child. He himself looked sulky, and not the less for a dirty French nurse who took her mistress's part. The room still smelt of the dinner, divers garments were strewed upon the chairs, and it was thus I discovered the once gay Melford, proverbial for his elegance of dress and manner, and happy, cheerful aspect, reduced to be hen-pecked, not even by a wife.

“ He started when he saw me, and his lady, snatching up her child, ran slip-shod out of the room, followed by her *soubrette*. Poor Melford looked heartily ashamed, and could scarcely give me the common compliments of reception. But when I told him the message I was charged with, which was in truth couched in the most kind and friendly terms, for I was bidden to lament, in my uncle's name, that they should be separated, and intreat him to return to the old footing, he became unusually and violently affected. He strode across the room, struck his forehead more than once, and casting his eyes upon parts of his child's dress and a coral which were left behind, he heaved a deep sigh, and squeezing me by the hand, said,

“ My dear friend, I am not worthy of it. This sad affair with Hortense! I dare not present myself at the park, the abode of all that is pure and virtuous—there is no disguising it, I DARE not come. Tell them not how you found me; yet that I am greatly obliged, and sorry that I cannot accept——”

“ Here he stopt, and in effect, pitying him from my soul, I could not attempt to persuade him. We soon therefore parted, and I left him to such happiness as Hortense could give him.”

“ And yet,” observed I, “ you say Hortense was beautiful and accomplished.”

“ She was attractingly, nay, voluptuously so, and her eye fascinating as a basilisk's when she pleased. Off his guard, therefore, and perhaps seeking refuge in sophistry, to escape from his disappointment with Bertha, he persuaded himself, that his connection with a well-bred, handsome courtesan, ranked with, and gave as much pleasure as a more legitimate attachment. I have heard him hold something like it, when, in a fit of resentment against the whole sex, he has said, as none of them have any heart, without which their virtue is of little consequence, it is quite unnecessary either to seek or expect more happiness than a beautiful exterior and accomplished manners can supply. The scene, however, I have described told a different story as to his feelings.”

“Yet you say he is not recovered, but has fallen into downright libertinism. How is that possible for one who ever loved or understood Bertha?”

“I fear,” replied Granville, “it is because—while tied to this woman (by whom he has another child), and who now rules him despotically—he thinks he has nothing left for it but to follow up his doctrine of ‘I take her body, you her mind; which has the better bargain?’”

“The truth I fear is, that, though no one can dispute that he loved Bertha, and, had he gained her, would have made a happy husband, his love was not unmingled with the pride which success with one so beautiful, well-born, and rich would have made him feel. Hence the madness caused by his disappointment was not for disappointment in love *alone*, but very strongly mixed with mortified vanity. Perhaps, also, his love was more sensual than pure, and in that case, his love of pleasure, as well as his hurt pride, drove him originally to this mode of revenge—for revenge he thought it. Had his affection for her been as pure as yours, he never would have stooped to such unworthy means of shewing his resentment.

“We shall, however, perhaps know more of him to-day, if the bottle, to which I am sorry to find he has too often recourse, in order to forget himself, will permit it.”

Much impressed by this story, I thanked Granville for his good opinion, and became almost impatient for his dinner party.

We were all assembled some time before Sir Harry made his appearance, and when he did so, I was shocked. Not only he had *slouched* in, as he said himself, in the *déshabillé* in which he had passed the whole morning, without the least attention even to cleanliness, but his features, formerly so composed with tranquil good-breeding, seemed wild and haggard, his brow knit, and his cheek flushed, as if he had been engaged in altercation. He made, however, no apology for being so late; saying bluntly enough, that as he had done dressing, even for the ladies, and knew he was to meet nobody but a set of bachelors, he thought they would rather admit him as a sloven, than be kept waiting.”

“If you have consulted your own comfort in this,” observed Granville (ambiguously, as I thought), “we have nothing to say.”

And we took our places at the table.

As he came so late, there had not been time for introductions, and it was only upon Granville’s calling upon me casually by name that Sir Harry seemed to notice me with his glass—when I could plainly perceive, by the effect it had upon him, that he had made me out as the person of possibly what he thought an equivocal de-

scription, between gentleman and humble friend, whom he had formerly met, in doubtful circumstances, at York.

The remembrance certainly affected him, for he looked intensely at me, sighed, and was silent, and seemed to wish to drown thought by a rapid challenge of bumpers with every one at the table.

Not content with this, at the dessert he made a desperate attack on a vase of brandy cherries, confirming uncomfortably the account Granville had heard of his disposition to raise artificial spirits from these libations.

By those means, though at first he had been almost sullenly silent, he grew in the end loquacious upon almost all the subjects that were started, particularly on one, which not unnaturally, in a company of young men, almost all unmarried, turned upon the character, power, and influence of women.

This, always interesting to me, was rendered peculiarly so by the manner in which he treated it, as I could never forget that he had been the sincere lover of Bertha, and therefore most likely to do justice to the question. How was I surprised and disappointed, notwithstanding Granville's forewarning, to hear what I did! How did I lament what seemed to me the overthrow of a mind, which, I agreed with Granville in thinking, was made for better things.

The conversation turning, I know not by what introduction, upon the licentiousness of the times of Charles II. and Louis XIV., and the manners and engagements of women in those days, Sir Harry professed himself their unqualified admirer, as the only example of real freedom of life, unrestrained by musty rules, made only, he said, to tyrannize over the young and ardent of both sexes, under sophistical pretences.

He, of course, laughed at marriage, and declared it a crafty invention of priests and lawyers, and adopted by statesmen to keep people in trammels, and save trouble. It followed that he was an advocate for the doctrines which, growing out of the licentiousness of French romances, were beginning to be seriously entertained by the then wide-spreading philosophy which was hastening the crisis of the French revolution. By these it was held, and afterwards for a time made law, that marriage meant an agreement of men and women to live together so long as they were mutually pleased, and no longer.

What was called the virtue of a woman, he counted for nothing, being, as he said, the result of force. He supported this theory by examples drawn from the *authorized liaisons*, as he called them, at Paris, where he seemed to have studied them, as well as from a number of those loose and mischievous memoirs of actresses, and fashionable demireps, which from time to time had appeared, and had been equally the object of his research. Some of these were

Ninon de Lenclos, Constantia Philips, Mrs. Baddeley, Mrs. Robinson, *et id genus omne*—in all of which he appeared to be well versed.

To do justice to Granville's party, though almost all very young men, we looked at one another with a kind of disgust at these sentiments, which Granville endeavoured to get rid of, rather than answer, by saying he was quite sure his friend Sir Harry was not serious in them, and only broached them as amusing paradoxes.

Sir Harry, however, declined availing himself of the retreat thus offered, declaring he was perfectly in earnest; and moreover added (for by this time the claret began to work), that he did not believe there was one in the company who, if he dared, would not avow himself of the same opinion.

"I should be sorry to think that," said Mr. Brownlow, a gentleman of about Granville's age, of uncommon intelligence of features as well as elegance of appearance, and who, it seems, after having had the reputation of being a great champion, as well as admirer of the sex, was lately married. "I believe I know something of women, and I beg not to be included in this sweeping declaration."

"We shall be all against you, Melford," said Granville, "so you may as well give in, and confess that you have thrown up a straw to see how the wind lies."

"No such thing," replied Sir Harry; "and least of all, since Brownlow professes to be against me—the most determined devotee and worshipper in the temple of Cupid; whose taste in beauty is proverbial, and who is courted by the women for a good word, or bad sonnet, to put them into fashion."

Brownlow good-humouredly joined in the laugh which this occasioned, observing, however somewhat seriously,

"If I am, indeed, all this, I trust it may be a proof that I am not a bad judge of my subject, and that I may be right in opposing every one of the strange positions you have laid down, particularly when you disparage marriage, and prefer a brittle mistress, even (as I would allow you to mean) as a mere source of pleasure, to a virtuous wife."

"This, to *me*," replied the baronet; "me, who have heard you rave by the hour about Madame Rossi's grace and Miss Brown's charms¹; so that you never missed an opera when one danced in *Don Juan*; nor the *Duenna*, or *Beggar's Opera*, when the other sang in Clara or Polly. Nay, you are talked of, and cannot deny it, as one of the initiated, a hero of the Green-room."

Here Sir Harry got another little laugh against Mr. Brownlow.

¹ Madame Rossi was the Taglioni of this time; and Miss Brown, afterwards Mrs. Cargill, the original Clara of the *Duenna*, and most attractive Polly in the *Beggar's Opera*.

who, however, sustained himself with dignity, though he pleaded guilty to the whole charge of admiring the theatrical charms of both the ladies mentioned, and even of his pleasure sometimes in the Green-room.

"You see," said he, "I deny nothing, for, in truth, it is this very experience of the little real power of attraction in your goddesses that gives me a right to protest against your opinions. I may and do find pleasure in contemplating the talents, and, if you will, the beauty, of these and other celebrated ladies (the whole sex at large, if it so please you); but do not mistake me—with all my devotion, and whatever my admiration of them for the passing hour,—for her person, her wit, or her accomplishments, I could not live as a companion with any woman whom I could not esteem."

Sir Harry looked a little disconcerted, especially when we all seemed to approve the sentiment; but still more when Mr. Brownlow went on—

"Her wit, indeed, if it was very racy and pungent, as was said of Lady Dorchester's and Nell Gwyn's, I might admire; her accomplishments might even fill me with wonder; but would this either create a moral respect, or satisfy the heart? When passion was gratified, and languished, as it soon would, what would be left to renew, or continue, much more to heighten it? Any thing from mind? from reciprocity of sentiment? from mutual esteem? No. She has no mind; or if she has, it can only embitter her feelings, by making her lament the loss of her virtue."

"Is virtue, then, or rather chastity, for that is your meaning," said Sir Harry, "a *sine qua non* to good taste? In the arts, or *belles-lettres*, for instance? May not an elegant-minded mistress be your companion there?"

"My point is," answered Brownlow, "that in an unchaste woman, or one who has parted with her honour, this elegance of mind is not to be found."

"What! may not she understand and admire a picture or a statue?"

"Yes; particularly if they partake, as they very likely may, of her own licentiousness; but in the *belles-lettres*, which you also mentioned, I should say not;—for genuine *belles-lettres* having good taste for their province, and all good taste, that is, real elegance of mind, requiring delicacy and virtue for their foundation, nay, their very essence, a woman destitute of these, as an unchaste woman must be, cannot feel their real beauties."

"According to you, then, a kept mistress could not relish Shakspeare?"

"I know not," said Brownlow, "what parts of him she might relish; but there are parts which, if she is not lost to all feeling,

must make her ashamed, despairing, and unhappy. What woman of loose conduct, if not abandoned, could contemplate the innocent Juliet or Desdemona, Imogen or Ophelia, and, far from pleasure, not turn with horror to herself? But if abandoned, what pretension can she have to the delicacy of mind which I have said is essential to the good taste necessary to make a woman a companion?"

We all applauded this sentiment, and the baronet looked embarrassed.

"As my support in this," continued Brownlow, "recollect the poor Jesse of Shenstone, once seemingly endowed with a taste for elegance, but lost with her innocence :

' If thro' the garden's flowery walks I stray,
And court the jasmins which could once allure,
Hope not to find delight in us, they say,
For we are spotless, Jesse, we are pure.'

Such self-condemnation, by destroying all cheerfulness, must at once destroy companionship, and render even beauty nugatory, perhaps repulsive; and thus, as far as even mere passion is concerned, your heroine has lost the power of creating it, and has dwindled either into a sorrowful mope, or a reckless, abandoned prostitute."

Instead of answering this forcible elucidation, Sir Harry filled his glass to the brim, and began beating the devil's tattoo under the table; and it was easy to see he was maintaining a contest with himself; but, rallying a little, he observed,

"This will, at least, not apply to a mistress's wit. That surely must remain intrinsically wit, whatever becomes of esteem."

"I am too fond of wit, as a mark of intellectual vigour," returned Mr. Brownlow, "to deny its power. But in this instance, what power? To please by filling the understanding, and giving food for reflection? No; to amuse, perhaps to dazzle and excite, but only for a moment. The effect over, it revives not. Like a cordial, it warms and kindles, but has no nourishment; for we love not, because we do not respect the person of the speaker, and our esteem for intellect is so mingled with disesteem for character, that we do not remember what is spoken with pleasure."

"According to this," said Sir Harry, "you would not admire a beautiful passage in a play, should the actor be a bad moral character."

"I should endeavour," returned Brownlow, "to think only of the author, and forget the actor."

"But how, if the author himself was a profligate? Would that derogate from the beauty of the language?"

"Not from its beauty in the abstract," returned Brownlow, "but

from my pleasure in it, certainly, unless I could succeed in forgetting the writer."

"What think you of Sterne or Rousseau?" asked Sir Harry.

"As writers or men?" asked Brownlow,

"As both conjoined," replied Sir Harry.

"Much as I admire them as writers," said his opponent, "if I think of their characters while reading, I answer distinctly and fairly, my pleasure is much diminished."

"What! at the pathos which surrounds Uncle Toby and Le Fevre, or the wit that belongs to old Shandy!"

"Even so; unless, as it luckily often happens, that in this wit and pathos I am so beguiled, that I forget the bad husband and pretended lover of virtue."

"And Rousseau?"

"There I am very clear; for in all his most eloquent touches, I never do, and never can, forget the hypocritical sophist—the avowed thief—the false witness—the deserter of his offspring. No, Melford, do not be led astray by the meteor of false sentiment, into the deceit of thinking evil good; or good evil; or that a woman's virtue does not heighten her charms, even to a man of pleasure. But, as to the meretricious attractions of the persons you have mentioned, be assured, what I always thought, and now know, is true; that one kind look, one soft pressure of the hand, from the wife of your heart, who loves you, and knows you love her, is worth a whole harem of purchased favours."

This address seemed by no means thrown away upon him to whom it was directed, for he not only shewed signs of being beat, but of inward distress, for which, when I thought of what had caused this change in his character, I heartily pitied him.

Nor was it lost upon any of us, least of all upon myself; for I conceived both liking and respect for Brownlow, who did honour to that undefinable character, a man of fashion; and I was glad, by Granville's particular introduction to him, to add so worthily to the list of my select acquaintance.

Having outstaid the company, Granville gave me the following account of Brownlow:—

"He is a man of fortune," said he, "good family, and of the best *monde*; or, as Shakspeare would say, 'of great admittance.' He has been as much what is called a man of pleasure, as a pure taste and fine mind would permit him to be, so as to have acquired much knowledge of the ways, perhaps of the corruptions of society, without being corrupted himself. His talents for pure and good criticism threw him at one time a good deal into the theatrical world, where his judgment was much respected, and his notice courted by the women as much as the men; and hence Melford's

allusions. But, if not his virtue, his *taste*, in regard to the sex, of which you saw a good specimen, kept him pure in those opinions which he so well enforced; and in this he was the more lucky, for, previous to his present happiness in marriage with a woman of great beauty and merit, he was a warm and ill-used lover."

"Ha!" cried I; "was such a man ill-used? Disappointed perhaps?"

"Downright jilted."

"You amaze me!"

"I thought I should; and I am not sorry that you have seen him thus flourishing and happy, because I had him often in my mind when I told you that a man might love to distraction, and yet recover; nay, as in this gentleman's instance, rejoice in his failure in one place, for his far superior happiness in another."

"This must be an interesting history," said I.

"It is; but not on account of any particular adventures—any romance—but merely from the completeness of his recovery, and his achievement afterwards of the most perfect felicity, from a state of seemingly the most torturing desolation."

This excited me more and more, and I told Granville he was too slow in his narration.

"You will be more impatient as we go on," said he, "for the love between him and his first mistress commenced when he was a youth and she a girl."

"Good. But pray go on."

"Her father, a country gentleman, was one of his guardians; he sometimes passed a vacation from college with them, and the woods and fields, the primroses and nightingales, produced their usual effect; in short, they fell violently in love with each other, though Elizabeth felt the indications of it first, and so ingenuously confessed it, that it operated most with him in producing the passion he felt on his part. As we were schoolfellows and fellow-collegians, I speak with full information."

"Pray get on," said I.

"Well; eternal constancy, as usual, was vowed; the match approved by papa, when a few years should have matured it, both being so young; meantime, correspondence, and a vast *et cætera*—*quæ nunc prescribere longum est*.

"As I was his confidant, I heard all his accounts of her beauty and merits, and sometimes saw them together; but, except in the common attractions of youth, freshness, and good humour, and a seemingly entire devotion to him, I perceived nothing to justify the frenzy which afterwards ensued on his disappointment."

"There was frenzy, then?"

"Scarcely short of it, I assure you. He was but one-and-twenty

when, though his own letters had begun to be not over warm, he complained that her's were growing cold, and this excited him from a tolerably tame, engaged lover, into one agitated with fears and uncertainties. He thought Elizabeth the most enchanting person upon earth; no one like her; he was perpetually invoking her name, and wrote most passionately; till her own warmth continuing to fall off, he could bear it no longer, and though scarcely of age, he resolved to bring the matter to a point, by insisting upon the immediate fulfilment of the engagement, or a breach of it for ever.

"To his then dismay, and after happiness, the breach was preferred. A winter at Bath, while he was immersed in Oxford studies, and the offers of a headlong young peer, just out of leading-strings, had undermined him; his betrothed was faithless, and he was undone."

"How could such a person," asked I, "have such consequence with him as to occasion the misery you say he suffered?"

"Ask," replied Granville, "those who understand the unintelligible subject of love, in all its million of forms and colours, to explain it, for I could as soon square the circle as tell you. All that I could really gather from it was, that real love is the most difficult thing in the world to discover; so many of its symptoms, and those the most marked and violent, being usurped by other passions."

"In this case, as I told you, my friend seemed frantic with disappointment. He exhibited sometimes a paroxysm of rage—sometimes a silent mournfulness, not the less pitiable, because I thought the occasion of it was unworthy. He was so sunk in bitterness as to loathe all his former occupations, whether of amusement or instruction, and even his food. He would estrange himself from company for weeks, and, like a Camillo, plunge into the depths of the forest of Dean, near which he dwelt, shunning every thing cheerful, and wholly absorbed by the disgust that consumed him."

"And yet I am sure all this passion—this agony of disappointment—was not the effect of love so much as mortification and hurt pride operating upon a sensibility, at that time of his life so morbid, that I feared for his mind. I am persuaded of this, because, while things were smooth, and he thought himself secure, his feelings were comparatively tame. He bore absence most heroically. His eyes did not sparkle, nor his countenance beam with joy, when the lady approached, and he always quitted her with calmness. Had prudence, or any other worldly cause, broke their engagement, I am mistaken if it would have cost him a sigh. On the contrary, I have seen him sigh when he has remarked how little of companionship she possessed for a mind like his. He admired, loved her

at first, as a beautiful child, but no more. He reposed upon this; expected no more; and was negatively happy. How was I astonished, therefore, to witness this burst of fury—this passion of anger—and still more at the lasting effects it seemed to produce upon him. At the distance of twelve months he could not hear her name mentioned, nor even that of the place where she dwelt, without trembling, and he shunned the pathway that led from his garden to the church-door, because several of the tomb-stones by which he had to pass recorded the name of Elizabeth.”

“It would be difficult,” said I, “to pronounce that this was not love, and yet, from your account of the object, it would be still more difficult to suppose it was.”

“All that we can decide upon,” returned Granville, “is, that the very profound and very new apothegm, that Love is blind, is founded in truth. The wonderful part of the story is, that Brownlow’s cure was as unaccountable as his infatuation. This compound passion of love, anger, and resentment, dropt out of his heart of itself, without being immediately influenced by any other. He enjoyed his liberty, and coursed the world in its pleasantest scenes; made a reputation for himself, which you see was deserved, and which went far to his success with the lady he married (Lady Elizabeth Belmore), as opposite to his former Elizabeth as light to darkness.

“And now go home; ponder all you have seen and heard; and rest assured that although, as in the case of poor Melford, a disappointment in love may lead to a destruction of mind (as, in fact, it does often to that of the body), yet such was not the intention of Nature when she indued us with such elasticity of disposition, and such good principles, as shine in Brownlow. Apply this to yourself, and so good night.”

CHAPTER XV.

I HAVE ANOTHER INTERVIEW WITH LADY HUNGERFORD, WHO IS MORE DISCOURAGING AND MYSTERIOUS, YET KINDER THAN EVER.

Thou art all ice—thy kindness freezes.

SHAKSPEARE.—*Richard III.*

I HAVE too long neglected to mention my charming instructress, Lady Hungerford. For though she was pleased to say I no longer wanted schooling, from old kindness she admitted me as usual; nay, as I thought, was more than ever gracious.

I did not plume myself upon this, for I had tact enough to see that Granville's friendship for me, or rather perhaps my friendship for *him*, which made him my constant theme, went full half-way towards the easy footing on which I was treated. Be that as it may, I was never denied, and sometimes without waiting in the ante-room was conducted at once to the boudoir.

On one of these occasions, Lady Hungerford was not there, though she could only just have quitted it, for her keys were in her cabinet, and several letters lay open upon the table. One of them, a very long one, was in a hand I had always too well recollected ; and, to my astonishment, delight, and terror, a miniature of the writer, exquisitely painted, and giving all the sparkle as well as sensibility of her countenance, lay by the side of it.

I was quite overpowered—my eyes gloated upon it—I fetched my breath quickly—and was lost in a trance, when my patroness entered.

She saw at once my whole situation ; coloured deeply herself, with surprise and agitation, and would have been angry, had she not seen, as she said, that I was more sinned against than sinning. She, however, in a hurried manner, swept the letters from the table, and turned the face of the miniature from my eyes ; though that did little good, for the back shewed one of those lovely dark tresses, which I had too often admired not to recognise.

After a minute's silence, during which she seemed to be recollecting herself, Lady Hungerford said,

“ This is most untoward. I will own to you that I have kept this picture almost religiously from your sight, from the fear of the very effect which I see it has had upon you ; and most seriously do I grieve to see how little you are cured when *most* it behoves you to be so.”

I gave a deep sigh at every thing being thus recalled, but could not help saying,

“ Surely, lady, there is some mystery hanging about this agitating subject, which, as you are so kind as to interest yourself about it, you would only be more merciful to explain. Why, may I humbly ask, does it *more* behove me now to be cured than at any other time, when at any, and every time, I feel that not to be so only urges me on to perdition ? ”

“ I had hoped,” replied she, recovering her composure, “ never to have heard that sentiment again ; and really, from your friend Mr. Granville's account, I thought that your study of the world, in which you were making such progress, had had the effect we both wished for you. This little incident has undeceived me ; and I shall certainly ask my uncle to send you abroad with your friend, as soon as the event he expects happens. To remain here is mad-

ness, and pity indeed is it that so fair a fortune in expectancy should be spoiled by such want of firmness." Then, seeing that I was about to reply, she interrupted me, saying, "It is not that I blame your constancy, or that I do not in some measure admire it; but when so strongly forbidden by duty to her, as well as yourself—"

"Duty to her!"

"Yes; for why should you embarrass, and add to her uneasiness?"

"I, madam? I *embarrass*? I *add* to uneasiness? What can this mean? Is not Miss Hastings free—free as air? Unless indeed she too has set her affection where it is not returned; but that—that's impossible!"

"I believe so," said Lady Hungerford. "But let me probe you, and deeply too, in a question which I will not ask if you are afraid of it; for I tell you it will try you."

"If it be any thing," replied I, firmly, "which concerns Miss Hastings' happiness—if it reveal that her affections are both pledged and requited—believe me, though my life depended upon it, I would rejoice."

"Nobly resolved, and nobly uttered," replied Lady Hungerford; "and I am sure my dear Bertha would feel all its generosity, could she know it. But tell me if I am really to understand what it imports, that you could see her married with composure, and be yourself happy?"

"With composure, I will not say," returned I; "but as happy as I am now—nay more, to think that her own happiness was secured, I am very sure of myself when I answer, yes."

"I am very sure," replied the frank and winning lady, "that you yourself deserve all the happiness you have missed, and if that will console you, that your own heart is not unworthy of Bertha's. Were the thing not absolutely impossible, and willed by fate so to be, I could even wish you success; nor, I am free to say, is there any thing in your birth, still less with your mind, and the prospects you have before you, in your worldly situation, which would prevent my doing so. But fate, as I have said, has so willed it, and must be obeyed. The thing, were you an emperor, is quite out of question."

I felt all the kindness and condescension of this speech, and only longed to kiss the fair hand which touched my arm in the eagerness with which she supported it by action. I felt it, however, as a complete death-warrant, and so I told her, adding my entreaty that all the mystery which seemed, particularly of late, to hang about the subject might be cleared up.

"It would," I said, "go farther than any thing else to settle

my mind for ever. As it is," I added, "the uncertainty, the mystery, are far more insupportable than the unequivocal assurance of her hand and heart being betrothed."

Lady Hungerford, smiling at the energy with which I said this, observed, that she thought Rousseau himself could not have expressed his feelings more warmly. Better, however, to forget, instead of nursing them, which it was too plain I was doing.

"Your ladyship need not fear for me," replied I, "provided only that the fact is, as I have gathered it from all quarters—that the execution is ordered, and that there are no hopes of a reprieve."

At this she looked hesitatingly, and at length observed,

"I do not mean to say, that what you have supposed, and seem so to wish, is the absolute fact; nor am I at liberty to say a word more; but if it were (whether this is, or is not, bravado), let me ask, what really would become of your affection?"

"Madam," answered I, "I would hug it to my heart, and carry it with me to the grave."

The amiable woman was moved with this in a manner as remarkable as unexpected. Her cheek flushed, tears glistened in her eyes, and this queen of fashion, this observed of the drawing-room, and ornament of the presence, became an absolute daughter of nature in her simplest and most amiable form. How wrong are upstart railers to suppose that either men or women are *necessarily* hardened because their lot is cast among the great.

Finding that the agitation produced did not subside, she said, with a smile which almost contradicted her words,

"You must go, for 'tis in vain to counsel, and almost to blame you. These conversations do me no good, and must not be renewed. Go; and God bless you."

With that she gave me her hand, which with all her kindness she had never done before, and I left her in a tumult of curiosity as well as of anxiety; for, while I considered this conversation more than ever decisive of my fate, there was a mystery about it, which I would have given more than I was worth to unravel.

That day there was another great dinner at Lord Castleton's, very different from the last I described, as having been so honoured by the attendance of the illustrious Paragraph. In my then frame of mind, perhaps this was the best thing that could have happened, to

¹ This reflection, just in itself, is supported by a trait in a very great person, so pleasing, that I cannot help transcribing it. When the Dauphin of France was attacked by the small-pox, in 1752, his wife passed days and nights by his bed-side. Pousse, a blunt physician, called in, and being a stranger to the court, did not know her, and thought she was a hired nurse. "Parbleu," said he, "voilà la meilleure garde que j'aie vue. Comment vous appelle-t-on, ma bonne?"—*Mém. de Mad. Du Hausset*.

Catalogues are made of the crimes of royal persons; why not of their virtues?

divert it from the consuming thoughts which my interview with Lady Hungerford had generated. But my thoughts, not at all prepared to wander into the world, were centered more than ever in the comparatively little spot which contained all that, in my mind at least, that world could boast of, that was worth pursuing.

I would, therefore, far more readily have shut myself up with Granville, who called upon me an hour before dinner, to whom I related all that had passed with Lady Hungerford, and whom I in vain sounded, and at last entreated, as one in confidence of the family, to supply what Lady Hungerford thought it her duty to refuse me.

"I have long," said I, "thought there was some mystery hanging over this too fascinating being—fascinating, you know, to others as well as to me, but whose addresses she refused. At her age, and with her great part in the world, if she choose to play it, to remain shut up within so small, though seemingly so magic a circle as Foljambe, from which, as if spell-bound, she does not issue, never coming to London, or approaching the court, which she seems formed to adorn as well as a rural shrine; her father, though old, not being any obstacle to this from want of health or even inclination:—all this surely must appear as marvellous to you as to me, unless you have a key to it."

"You forget," said he (endeavouring, as I thought, to parry my question), "the domestic calamity they suffered, not so long ago as for its effect to have subsided. With all his faults Mr. Hastings loved his son, and she her brother, so much so, that although not in the same degree, we might almost compare her feelings to those of the lady Olivia in *Twelfth Night*, who also lost a brother,

‘ For whose dear love,
They say she hath abjured the sight
And company of men.’ ”

"Were this only the first year of that sad catastrophe," I replied, "the reason might suffice; but even Olivia, it should appear, did not remain a recluse three years, nor even in her retirement abjure the sight, at least, of the proper man. In short, her grief was not confined to the loss of a brother. Here, therefore, there not only may be, but from Lady Hungerford's plain admission, there is a proper man. For the love of heaven, therefore," said I, "as well as for the effectual cure it will prove to myself, tell me if it is so. Once convinced that her affections are engaged, though to whom, in the recesses where she has so long been buried, it would puzzle a magician to discover, I shall far sooner recover my senses, than under the impression that her heart is still virgin."

Granville smiled, but I never liked him so little as in his reply.

For, far from endeavouring to calm the agitation in which he saw me, he coolly observed, that if Lady Hungerford had plainly admitted it, I wanted no further proof.

"You are unkind, Granville," said I.

"We shall be too late for Lord Castleton's," replied he, and left me to dress.

It was plain to me that he knew more than he chose to reveal, and at the moment I hated him for it.

CHAPTER XVI.

MORE OF SOCIETY ; AND OF TWO NOBLE PERSONS I MEET WITH AT LORD CASTLETON'S.

Or else a feast,
And takes away the stomach ; such are the rich,
That have abundance, and enjoy it not.

SHAKESPEARE.—2 *Henry IV.*

You must consider that a prodigals' course
Is like the sun's, but not like his, recoverable.

Timon of Athens.

AFTER all, there is an elasticity of mind attendant upon a young gentleman of three-and-twenty, who has little upon his conscience, who has experienced no great misfortune, but who, on the contrary, views the world in all the prodigality of hope, for which kings and emperors might wisely exchange their diadems. Heaven be thanked, this is not confined to any particular condition of life, but is equally enjoyed by the prince and the peasant ; for it is the gift of the Author of nature to all his creatures who know how to use it. Happy are they with whom it lasts longer than the age I have mentioned.

From some of the guests I met at Lord Castleton's on the day I am now commemorating, if ever they had possessed it, it had long fled with their years, and, unfortunately, had not been replaced by any other blessings, such as I had met with in Manners.

The agitation I had undergone was at least not new : it had often risen and subsided, and I was not so absorbed by it, as not to make one or two of these characters my particular study. They were living proofs that neither rank nor wealth, and certainly not abilities, can command "our being's end and aim,"—happiness.

This being a speculation I was always fond of, by degrees the absorption of my mind yielded before it ; and, though the thought of company, when I wished to be a hermit, had at first revolted me,

the company in which I found myself, at length diverted and engaged much of my attention. There was indeed no illustrious Paragraph to amuse by his empty effrontery ; but there was that happy mixture of the distinguished of the land for high rank and good-breeding with those celebrated for talent and good-humour, in which my patron, “ in his happier hour,” used frequently to indulge his fine mind.

Two persons in particular, from what I had often heard of their history, though I had never seen them before, struck me as subjects for a philosopher of the world, which, as the pupil of Fothergill and Manners, notwithstanding my insignificance, I pretended (to myself, at least) to be. These were Lord Felix,—worthless in himself, but a minion of fortune ; and the Marquess of Rochfort, valuable in himself,—but the victim of self-will.

Lord Felix seemed to have been born and to have lived one of those indices marked out by Providence, to shew how utterly inadequate are the gifts of fortune, unaccompanied by the true knowledge of their usefulness, to produce happiness in one’s self, or esteem in others. He was profuse without being generous ; luxurious without comfort ; proud without self-respect. He had no capacity, and if ambitious, it was therefore in little things. His wealth might have given him influence in the state, or secured him the blessings of a thousand followers ; but he preferred frittering it away upon gilt plate, gilt coaches, trappings of horses, and laced liveries. If his dinners were the theme of praise for the exquisiteness of their cookery, their unseasonable delicacies, and the raciness of his wines, his elation was at its highest ; but he shewed little choice in the selection of his guests, and his carnal feasts were any thing but those of reason.

The consequence was, that Lord Felix was generally surrounded by parasites, who paid him with open flattery and secret contempt. His house was a magazine of costly antiques, marbles, models, and expensive, but not the best paintings ; and his library made a scholar’s mouth water ; but the poor gentleman, wholly without knowledge, though expensively educated, and twice experienced in the tour of Europe, knew nothing of these things, and he entertained a librarian and a foreign virtuoso for the express purpose of explaining what he could not explain himself to those who came to see him.

Nothing pleased Lord Felix more than to be asked the value of what his town house contained ; and the affected carelessness, but real complacency, with which he answered, “ he believed about one hundred and fifty thousand pounds,” shewed the whole length, and breadth, and depth of his mind.

With all this, he was no patron of the arts, no contributor to the

success of public institutions, or the relief of private distress. In short, he imitated the waste, but not the generosity of the unhappy Timon.

But as Lord Felix scarcely ever met with a disappointment in life, could it be that he was not what his name imported, happy?

Whatever he had been in his youth, when accumulating what I have described, he certainly was not so now. For, far advanced in age, excitement, and with it, occupation, was gone; and having no real resources, no mental pleasures, he became a burthen to himself in the hour of loneliness, and, unequal to enlightened companions, was left to the purchased attentions of interested hangers-on.

From this his only relief was the banquet and dissipation, though even these were beyond his bodily strength. The moment of dinner, and the company it assembled, was, however, the great moment of the day, for it took him out of himself; and as his high quality obtained him admittance everywhere, for the same reason, tottering as he was with age, he visited the midnight assembly or ball-room, when all his spirits were exhausted, and he was fitted only for bed.

What was worse, if he slept not when there, he had no consolation; for, long past the age of man, any hour of the day or night (and he both knew and feared it) might bring him his summons; and when pale Death, who, without Horace's authority for it, we know beats equally at the door of the palace and the cottage¹, should knock at his, his laced porter could not tell him his lordship was "not at home." This affected him; for his kingdom was of *this* world, and a voice had certainly "fallen from heaven," telling him that that kingdom had departed².

In this trial he had no consolation from religion; for of religion, amidst his splendour, he had never found it necessary to think. He knew nothing of himself but what other people told him; and, struck with his display, or seduced by interest, they told him many a falsehood. The very best of them flattered themselves in flattering him. His nod, backed by his riches, gave them importance; and this nod could only be obtained by adulation.

With all his profusion, as he had never been munificent; he had not even the comfort which the "good old Erle of Devonschire" recorded on his tomb:

"What I spent, that I had;
What I gave, that I *have*."

¹ "Pallida mors æquo pulsat pede," etc.

² "While the word was in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, saying, O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken, the kingdom is departed from thee."

Daniel, iv. 31.

In short, he was a sad example of the apothegm of Seneca :

“ Illi mors gravior incubat,
Qui notus nimis omnibus,
Ignotus moritur sibi .”

The other living proof I have mentioned—that high station and apparent prosperity by no means carry happiness along with them—was exhibited, to the great regret of those who knew him well, by the Marquess of Rochfort. He was a nobleman of very superior character, and of higher rank, though much less wealth, than Lord Felix.

That his wealth, indeed, was greatly inferior to what his rank and ambition required, had plunged him into difficulties which never left him during life. But this was the least cause of his chagrin ; for he was of a very high and towering spirit, which neither rank nor wealth could satisfy, without power and popularity ; and power and popularity were (I know not why, for he was eminently able, and generous to profusion) always denied him.

Without success in these, his very ability and prominence in every thing else, whether in political knowledge, in the arts and liberal studies, or a very general information, and above all, the sacrifices he made for popularity in vain, were only a source of mortification to him, which he could not disguise.

Conscious of his endowments, his object was high office, through the *public* voice rather than private influence ; and while he could not obtain it, he daily saw quieter and more ordinary men, confessedly his inferiors, preferred before him.

This embittered his private moments ; and though, from a wish to appear above it, he indulged in a display of liveliness, anecdote, and conversational gaiety, which made him, perhaps naturally, the most agreeable man in England, yet his spirit was evidently tinged with an inward gloom, which preyed upon him in secret, and instead of being the cheerful companion in society, enjoyed by all, which he might have been, he was soured into a captious and unpleasant satirist, loved by few.

Yet Lord Rochfort had some noble qualities. Though violent when opposed, he was easily appeased, could generously forgive, and never deserted or changed a friend. On the contrary, he was distinguished as a most kind patron, and often obtained advancement for his *protégés*, which he failed in achieving for himself. At the same time, his noblest, but (unchecked as it was by prudence) his most unfortunate propensity, a generosity, profuse even

“ Death hangs with greater terror over him, who, known too much to the world, dies unknown to himself.”

to madness, had brought his fortunes low, though he would not confess it, even to himself ; for he had the soul of a prince, and thought himself and lived like one, reckless of consequences.

Every year added to his embarrassments, and told him a tale, which he would not believe, spite of his steward. Vehement in every thing, whether as to opinions or conduct, it was dreadful to see a man of his mind and parts so absolutely ruined, from the want of that common sense without which parts and mind only hasten destruction.

He was eaten up by numerous retainers, which, being the representative of many great feudal families, he thought it was a sort of duty to their memory to maintain in idleness. He had more than one castle, with all royalties attached ; to keep up which in almost pristine waste, he sacrificed uselessly one-half of his revenues. With nothing like their means, but with a view to popularity, he emulated the feasts and pageants of his ancestors ; nor, though he was yearly poorer and poorer, would he reduce the scale of his magnificent benefactions and costly compliments to those he often feasted, from royalty down to his country neighbours.

His real charities, too, for which he had a hand open as day, his pensions to decayed families, support to relations, subscriptions to all great institutions, presents to artists, and gallantries to lady friends in jewels and ornaments—all these were, like Anthonio's losses,

“ Enough to press a royal merchant down.”

But the very suspicion of this neutralized all his sacrifices to obtain that consequence and power for which in part he made them ; and to his mortification he found, that to ruin himself made no way with either the court or the people.

A magnificence which it was thought could not continue was slighted, though for a time its benefits were accepted. He was sometimes even thwarted, or not supported, by those whom his liberality had fed, or his attentions flattered ; and he discovered in the language of Johnson, on the character of his prototype Timon, that he had scattered bounty, but conferred no benefit, and bought flattery, but not friendship.

All this had at last its usual effect—he thought himself ill-used by his fellow-men, and shewed strong symptoms of cynicism. He did not absolutely hate mankind, but he often shunned them, and suspecting everybody's motives, felt a canker at his heart, which, even under the show of hilarity, was detected in a moment.

No ; the Marquess of Rochfort, any more than Lord Felix, was not happy.

These two noble persons engaged all my attention, as I have said, at the dinner I am recording at Lord Castleton's. For, as I had heard everywhere of Lord Felix's grandeur and luxury, surpassing all modern and almost equalling all antient story, I expected something of superior mark in his physiognomy, manner, and conversation.

Nothing like it. A little, shrivelled old man, with a dead eye, which never could have been lively; an almost mean person, not at all relieved, but rather the contrary, by a broad red ribbon, characterized his outward man; and as to the inner, as far as it could be collected from conversation, to discuss the merits of the cookery, and the embossed plate, which he did Lord Castleton the honour of saying was next to his own in magnificence, was all we could gather of what his mind or opinions were upon any subject: for, except greedily to devour venison, and swallow repeated glasses of champagne, as if it was an elixir on which his life depended, he scarcely opened his mouth. He chuckled a little, indeed, at some of Lord Rochfort's satirical sallies; which induced the latter to say (aside) to Lord Castleton, that if Felix had not the wit to *say* ill-natured things himself, he could, at least, enjoy them from others.

A discussion now commencing between Lord Rochfort and Granville, on some point of taste in gothic architecture, occasioned by a visit they had made that morning to Strawberry Hill,—after saying the house was a mere piece of lath and plaster frippery, not fit for a gentleman to live in, Lord Felix fell asleep.

"Peace to his manes!" said Lord Rochfort, who had no respect for him.

"Why, he is not dead," observed Granville.

"No; but he is buried, which is the next best thing," said his lordship.

The conversation, as it proceeded, afforded room for a little more of the marquess's spleen, in which he did not spare any one who was brought to his notice.

A late minister (Lord Heavitree) being named, who was little famous for his knowledge of state affairs, and who had lately resigned, Lord Rochfort proposed his health, adding, with ironical gravity, a wish for Lord Castleton's sake, that he had remained in the cabinet.

Lord Castleton looked grave, not liking the conversation; but Granville asking his reason for the wish, he observed that a British minister ought, like Cæsar, to have about him none but fat colleagues, like Lord Heavitree,

"Sleek-headed men, and such as sleep o' nights;"
not those who, like Cassius, have

"A lean and hungry look, and think too much.
Such men are dangerous."

This sally produced a laugh, in which all joined but the noble host, who endeavoured to restrain his satirical guest, but without success. For being *en verve*, and not in good humour at Lord Heavitree's place being filled up by a young orator, who had given the highest promise of the consummate ability he afterwards displayed, and who was remarkably thin, he jestingly reproached Lord Castleton, for permitting such an appointment; and pursuing the comparison he had begun with in a sort of paraphrase, said to him,

“ I do not know the man you should avoid
So much as that spare William. He reads much,
He is a great observer, and he looks
Quite through the deeds of men; he loves no plays,
As thou dost, Granville. He hears no music.
Such a man as he be never at heart's ease,
And therefore are they very dangerous.”

Lord Castleton himself could not help joining in the laugh which this produced.

A very dull speaker in the House being then mentioned, somebody wondered how it was that people could listen to him.

“ Why, not to mention its being a capital exercise of patience,” said Lord Rochfort, “ it is one of ‘ the pleasures of hope ; ’ one keeps hoping that every sentence will be his last. Just as our friend Gloomly,” added he, “ never fails to gratify every company into which he goes—that is, at the moment when he gets up to go away.”

Here one of the company expressing surprise at a celebrated literary peer being married to so silly a wife—

“ Silly, do you call her ? ” said Lord Rochfort ; “ I declare I always thought her a very sensible woman, for the only thing I ever heard her say was, that she wondered what anybody could find to admire in her lord's writings.”

Lord Castleton now complained of a busy public character, the Earl of ———, who was as mischievous, he said, as his understanding would allow him to be.

“ If that be all the mischief there is in him,” said Lord Rochfort, “ he'll never do harm to anybody.”

Granville then turned the discourse upon a very voluble member, just come into Parliament, who was perpetually talking on all sorts of subjects. “ In fact,” said Granville, “ he seems to know every thing.”

“ Every thing,” observed Lord Rochfort, “ except how to hold his tongue.”

Being then asked how Lord B., a great miser, lately dead, had

left his fortune, he said he had bequeathed every thing to his wife, even his crabbed temper and his avarice.

After this Granville expressed surprise that such a run was made by Paragraph in his paper against poor Sir Job Prosser (whom the marquess called Sir Job Proser), an inoffensive man, though a would-be politician and author, whose only fault was a little vanity.

“Depend upon it,” said the marquess, “they understand each other. Sir Job is rich, and he has made it worth Paragraph’s while to abuse him; for Paragraph’s abuse is worth paying for, though his praise is not.”

In this style, but in spirits evidently forced, he ran on, to the amusement of us all, except Lord Castleton himself, who seemed to lament what he thought this distortion of mind, though in every thing he shewed Lord Rochfort the greatest consideration.

I wondered; for with all this, his personal manner was of great good-nature, though he spared no one, and, like Jacques,

“Thus most invectively he pierced through
The body of the country, city, court.”

CHAPTER XVII.

MORE OF LORD ROCHFORD, TO WHOM I AM SENT ON A MISSION INTO NORTHUMBERLAND.—I AM FULL OF AMBITION, BUT FORGET IT BY AN INCIDENT IN YORKSHIRE, WHICH REVIVES ANOTHER PASSION.

Flaminius.—No care! no stop! so senseless of expense,
That he will neither know how to maintain it,
Nor cease his flow of riot!

1st Lord.—Come, shall we in,
And taste Lord Timon’s bounty?

2nd Lord.—He pours it out. Plutus, the god of gold,
Is but his steward.

SHAKESPEARE.—*Timon of Athens.*

SOON after this dinner at Lord Castleton’s, Lord Felix died, leaving not a single regret behind, except among his tradesmen; a sad memorial of the vanity of riches.

Lord Rochfort did not die; better, perhaps, if he had, rather than live to eat his heart, and waste his substance; proving not only the same vanity of riches, but also the insufficiency of abilities and accomplishments, however great, to procure whatever *summum bonum* we propose to ourselves.

As Lord Rochfort was frequently at Lord Castleton’s, I had a full

opportunity of knowing him. Vehemence, and the carrying every feeling, and even opinion, to extremity, though little persisted in, were his distinguishing features.

I cannot say he was "stiff in opinions," for he frequently changed them ; nor "always in the wrong," for his penetration often proved him right ; but whatever he was bent upon, he was headlong in pursuing. Shining, too, was necessary to him, whether in public or private, and he exemplified what was said of Wharton :—

" Though listening senates hung on all he spoke,
The club must hail him master of the joke."

This versatility and this vehemence, conjoined, were, however, next to his imprudence, his greatest enemies.

Yet Lord Castleton had so high an opinion of Lord Rochfort, as a man of genius and commanding talent, and, in fact, bore him such great good-will as a friend, that I expected daily to see a closer union between them in politics. In this I was disappointed ; for though, supported by the whole strength of Lord Castleton, who deemed him, in point of ability, equal to all the rest of the ministers put together, his advancement was opposed by them all, for reasons drawn from the character I have described ; and as their influence in Parliament was great, however wanting individually in talent, my patron was forced to yield.

Thus, a seal seemed set upon Lord Rochfort's peculiar ambition, which was to influence Europe, and *direct* the counsels of his sovereign, not to vegetate on any thing subordinate, however lucrative or splendid. Hence, though every thing short of the cabinet had been offered him—the great court offices, Ireland, and even India—he had refused them all ; and then, from indignation at his disappointments, or, as he called them, his affronts, he would be all for renouncing a rascally world—would declaim against riches, and be ready, in a fit of temperance,

" To feed on pulse."

In these capricious moments it was in vain to expect any consistency from him ; for, flying from politics, and even society, he would for a week or two shut himself up in the country, and swear that there was no happiness to be found in grandeur, but only in retreat and moderation.

Why he failed in his greater object, was a problem to most, but was attributed by Granville to his dictatorial as well as satirical temper, not at all softened by a consciousness of his superiority to others. Not only the ministry, but the sovereign himself, was afraid of him for this.

Yet he was too valuable an ally to slight, and no man received more personal attentions from the highest characters at home and abroad. Alas! this only hastened his ruin; for in this not only the magnificence of his disposition found greater cause for display, but he made it a sort of point of honour to indulge it to the utmost, in order to shew how far his personal consequence was above what he called the injustice of the world.

Foreign as well as native princes were his frequent guests; the splendour of his house and housekeeping was increased; his kitchen rivalled that of the king; and the Greek physician, who visited Anthony's at Alexandria, and came away astonished, though he might not have seen eight wild boars roasting for one supper¹, yet would have blessed himself at the profusion of the English nobleman.

Being a colonel in the army, he thought it was no more than became him, on the king's birth-day, to give dinners to his whole regiment, not only officers and men, but their wives and children, to the amount of near a thousand souls; and from this feast no officer's lady retired without an expensive present.

The subject of presents, indeed, occasioned sad reminiscences; for, emulating the magnificent customs of Spain, if a person of consequence professed great admiration of any particular valuable, of the many Lord Rochfort possessed, it was sent to him as a gift; while a gift made to himself was returned a hundred-fold. Thus the ambassador of France, having presented him with a plume of feathers, worn, *it was said*, by Henri Quatre, a picture of Titian, which the ambassador had admired, and which had cost many hundred pounds, was sent him in return. The pounds had not been paid out of current income, but capital; but the reputation of the marquess was highly raised by this trait of *grandeur d'ame*, at the court of Versailles.

This, and other instances of the same kind made Lord Castleton, who lamented the evident consequences of such prodigality, tremble for his friend, with whom he remonstrated upon its imprudence, but in vain. It was hence that Lord Castleton used to compare him, as well as Lord Felix (though for very different reasons), to Timon of Athens, particularly in that description of him, which he said he so resembled, that he thought he must have sat for it—

“ If I want gold, steal but a beggar's dog,
And give it Timon, why, the dog coins gold :
If I would sell my horse, and buy twenty more
Better than he, why, give my horse to Timon ;
Ask nothing ; *give* it him, it foals me, straight,

¹ See Plutarch's *Vit. Anton.*

And able horses. No porter at his gate,
But rather one that smiles, and still invites
All that pass by."

"It is, indeed, lamentable," observed Granville, who heard Lord Castleton make this remark, "to see those fine qualities which raise him so much above other men—genius, integrity, spirit, eloquence, and penetrating judgment in every thing but what concerns himself—all thrown away, from the mere want of what no man so low but he may possess it—prudence. For, pursuing your comparison out of the same scene you have cited, I fear the time fast approaches when, if

'Every feather sticks in his own wing,
Lord Timon will be left a naked gull,
Which flashes now a phoenix.'"

"It is certain," said Lord Castleton, in reply, "that with the vehemence and energy of Cardinal de Retz, he has all his recklessness as to money, when, on being reproached with his debts, the Cardinal said, 'Cæsar, at my age, owed more.'"

"I have heard," remarked Granville, "that it is this that disinclines the king to him; at least the *on dit* says that formerly, when there was a question of placing him at the Treasury, his majesty, with characteristic terseness, replied, 'What, trust him with my money, when he cannot take care of his own! No, no; that won't do.'"

Lord Castleton, though in a grave humour, prompted by the subject, could not help smiling at this, and rallied Granville upon his gossiping anecdote; which, however, he owned, though it might be false, was very well got up, for it was quite in character.

Some time after this conversation, I had an opportunity of seeing many of these traits realized in this remarkable, and, in many respects, superior person; for Lord Castleton's melancholy prognostics were sooner realized than he had expected. Execution after execution was levied in his houses both in town and country, and the further dissipation of his fortune by presents or other magnificence was effectually prevented.

This was hard to bear by one of his turn; but it was made worse by the falling off of almost all his followers, who, as he could no longer feast them, no longer flattered him. Lord Castleton did what he could to soften his reverse, by endeavouring to persuade him to accept the richest of the governments abroad which happened to be vacant; but with proud obstinacy he refused, still asserting his claims to one of the highest seats in the cabinet, glancing at his following in the House of Commons, which *had been* not incon-

siderable. But, to his dismay and eternal mortification, the two or three members who owed their seats to him, and the whole of the small party which had hitherto acknowledged him as their leader, refused to follow him any longer, and gave their unqualified support to the government.

This disappointment cankered his heart, and, like many other disappointed politicians, he renounced the world, and fled away in earnest, to nurse his resentment in solitude; not now, as it had sometimes been before, in his country palace a short distance from London, but in an ancient and unvisited old border castle in the extremity of the north, called Belford Tower.

This betokened a more permanent resolve than usual, and from this place his letters to Lord Castleton, the only one of the ministry with whom he kept terms, breathed nothing but misanthropy, though he softened it by calling them essays *de contemptu mundi*.

Lord Castleton had attempted, for many months, to recal him, in vain; and at length, still anxious for his active support, particularly on measures then pending, to which there was a very threatening opposition, and upon which he was particularly well informed, he resolved to lay the whole government scheme before him, in all its details, declaring they looked upon him as their chief ally. He added his firm promise to renew his endeavours to overcome the repugnance of some of his colleagues to act with him in the cabinet, and particularly of a duke minister, whom Lord Rochfort considered as much his inferior, but to whom, from his personal court favour, not only he chiefly attributed his exclusion, but accused him of having undermined him with the sovereign.

This offer, Lord Castleton thought, would be the most powerful appeal he could make to him; and as, though ruined, he was still far too high a person to be addressed on such a matter by letter, through a common state messenger, he resolved to send his own secretary, as more becoming the importance of the mission. Accordingly, after being closeted upon it several hours, and furnished with all requisite information both in regard to the subject and the character and former history of the marquess, I was detached on this important embassy.

This attempt at conciliation, and the reasons for selecting *me* to conduct it, as more reverential and complimentary towards the person to be conciliated, gave me a lesson in party politics which opened new views to me, both as to men and things. Granville congratulated me upon it, as a proof of my advancing fortune under Lord Castleton; and that notion, spite of all resolves, was always closely united to the idea of her whom, for the fiftieth time, I had renounced.

Be this as it might, Granville's intimation was by no means lost

upon me; for though I was still possessed by a hopeless attachment, yet I felt more and more that it was hopeless, and this left room for ambition to expand itself. The sanguine temper, therefore, of a young mind, obtained its usual play on this commission of Lord Castleton, and the views of futurity which it gave me much enlivened my journey, at least as far as Ferry-bridge: for there, even without an important incident that occurred, my thoughts would have taken a far different range.

I certainly did not, as formerly, quit the old road to York, for the sake of a *more picturesque country and a finer view of the river*¹; but as I got into the latitude of Foljambe, I found my eyes invariably glancing to the left, and my heart beat high, and palpitated more violently than I wished, when I read on a direction-post at the end of a lane, "The cross-road to Foljambe."

At that moment a carriage, of foreign, and, as I thought, German make, came rattling up, the horses of which were from the same house as mine, but the postillion, who had been lately hired, beckoned his fellow-whip, who drove me, to stop, in order to put him in the right road to Foljambe.

"You should have turned to the left on leaving the bridge," said my boy, "and you will scarcely make out the cross-road."

To make things sure, therefore, the boys asked permission to exchange jobs, which was granted by me, and the gentleman of the foreign carriage, who I now perceived, by his air, was a man of very distinguished manner and countenance. He seemed about five-and-twenty, and wore a laced manteau, and cap of handsome sable. The arms on his carriage were of many quarterings, and the shield containing them was borne on the breast of a black eagle, spreading over the whole pannel.

When the boys had changed, and the foreign carriage had moved on, I naturally asked my driver if he knew who the gentleman was whom he had been driving. Think of my surprise, I might say my agitation, when he told me, upon the information of his valet, that he was a German prince, and cousin to a *sort* of king.

"Good heavens!" I involuntarily exclaimed, "and do you know his name?"

"I cannot pernounce it," said the boy, mounting his horse, "but it was something about Sacks, and something else which I cannot remember."

"Was it Saxe Eisenach?" asked I, with agitation.

"That were like it," answered the postillion, and flourishing his whip, the chaise moved on.

"Good heavens!" again cried I—"he is her cousin, and is

¹ See Vol. I., p. 103.

going to enjoy her society in the ease of family intimacy ;” and I threw myself back in my chaise, with I know not what forebodings.

My reverie upon this lasted many minutes ; when reason recovering, I rallied and asked myself—why not ? Why should not the most natural thing in the world, a visit from a near relation, take place ? But above all, what was it to me ? O ! but he was so handsome, so striking in his manner, so well dressed ! Well, and again, what was that to me ?

Alas ! I did not like to answer the question. Yet, having asked, I wished to answer it with—“nothing”—but the word, like the Amen of Macbeth, stuck in my throat.

I tried to rouse myself, but conjecture upon conjecture pressed upon me all the way to York. My mission, Lord Rochfort, and Lord Castleton himself, were forgotten, and I could think of nothing but Bertha and her handsome cousin—a prince, too !

Was I relieved when I got to York ? Let those answer who have ever felt the pangs of, what I thought, despised love, made sharper by jealousy.

On going to the coffee-room to order a mutton chop, and see the London papers, just come in, the first thing I read was the following among the arrivals :—“Prince Adolphus of Saxe Eisenach, who immediately took post for Yorkshire, it is said, upon a very tender errand, as a treaty of marriage with his cousin, Miss Hastings, the beautiful heiress of Foljambe Park, has long been on the tapis.”

The paper fell from my hands. I turned pale, and was seized with tremor. O ! how well was I cured !

When I recovered from the shock, I consoled myself in the only manner by which I could be consoled. I would not believe it. How was it possible that this could be, and I not informed of it ? Could Granville or Lady Hungerford not know it ? Alas ! I thought they did know it, though they refused to communicate it to me, thinking perhaps that ignorance was bliss ; and hence, at once, the solution of the mystery I had so often endeavoured to get them to disclose.

And yet it could not be concealed, and therefore why not tell it ? Here was another doubt. But again, on the other hand, what so likely ? The connection and intercourse always kept up ; the engraving of the young hussar, and his coat armour, hung in the place of honour, in Bertha’s summer-house at Foljambe ; the packet from Prince Adolphus, which Bertha took from her father when I was last at the park ; the mutual advantages of the match ; the probable wishes, and perhaps dying injunctions, of Bertha’s mother ; and above all, the seeming personal merit of the young prince—Oh ! how were not the heart and head made the sport of all these contending arguments !

But at length an apparently all-conquering one put an end to doubt. The secret was now out, why Bertha had rejected Sir Harry Melford and Lord Albany, and always kept so aloof from the world; and the unwillingness of her father to encourage their offers, was here well explained. It was clear that she and the prince had long been betrothed.

This settled the question for a while, till doubt was again revived by the total ignorance in which Foljambe must have been, of a thing of such importance, when he promoted so urgently the suit of his friends.

This puzzled me more than ever. I walked up and down the coffee-room, unmindful of the gaze of strangers. My dinner had long been on the table, cold and untouched. I read the paper again and again, but with no other result than the same credibility attached to it, and the same wishes not to believe it.

At length I called for pen, ink, and paper; I copied the paragraph, and inclosed it in a letter to Granville, imploring him, as he valued my recovery, to tell me if the news was true; assuring him, if it was, that it would be far better to know it than the excitement of uncertainty.

I began a letter also to Lady Hungerford upon the same subject; but exclusive of the freedom of that intrusion, my pride forbade my going on, and my chaise being announced, I threw myself into it, paying for a dinner I had not eaten, and scarcely recovered my clearness of thought till I got to North Allerton.

CHAPTER XVIII.

I PARTIALLY RECOVER FROM MY ALARM, AND AM DIVERTED FROM IT BY MEETING AN OLD SCHOOLFELLOW, WHO GIVES ME INFORMATION RESPECTING THE MARQUESS.

My good lord, have great care
I be not found a talker.

SHAKSPEARE.—*Henry VIII.*

THIRTY miles is a long way for a man, who never had a hope, to continue to resist proofs that he is hopeless. What was there, after all, to make my case different from what it was when I left London? Strange that I had not asked myself this question before! But the surprise; the suddenness; the encounter with the very man himself; his handsome face; his title; his mustachios!—All this threw me off my guard.

“ Who could be wise, amazed, temperate and furious,
Loyal and neutral in a moment? No man.
The expedition of my violent love
Outran the power of reason.”

By degrees, however, reason resumed the upper hand (that is, as much as ever it had had it), and grew stronger and stronger as I progressed farther and farther from the scene of my late encounter, and the neighbourhood which it always maddened me to think of. I became cooler for my thirty miles' reflection; and, by the time I got to Newcastle, the thousand ships I saw in the Tyne, and the thousand coal-carts on the roads, all so incompatible with romance (for who ever heard of love in a coal-pit?), dissipated most of my doubts and anxieties, and brought all the realities of the world once more before me.

I again began to think of Lord Rochfort, and his disappointments, so different from my own; and felicitated myself that I had not yet the mortifications of ambition to add to those of love.

At Newcastle I found that I had still fifty miles to Belford Tower, and had therefore still more time to recover myself, and forget the horrors inspired by Prince Adolphus and his mustachios. In effect, I made such good use of the opportunity, that by the time I got to Alnwick, I was in a very fair frame of mind to execute my political commission.

The princely Alnwick, too, brought very different scenes before me—Hotspur and the Douglasses—and I felt very different from a modern lover and a little secretary.

This was farther confirmed by the sight of Warkworth Castle, though in ruins, which elevated me into my ancestor, Lord Bardolfe himself. For it was here (and I endeavoured to trace out the identical spot) that old Northumberland had walked forth into his orchard, when Bardolfe's sanguine soul communicated to him the news of a Shrewsbury victory, afterwards so fearfully contradicted.

“ Who keeps the gate? ho! Where is the earl?” said I, as I approached the venerable remains; and as no porter was there to answer me, I answered myself with,

“ His lordship has walked forth into the orchard.
Please it, your honour, knock but at the gate,
And he himself will answer.”

It is certain I never felt the Bardolfe and Clifford blood tingle in my veins so powerfully as it did in the recollection of the interesting scene which followed with Northumberland, in the very place where it was supposed to have happened. Nor was I a little proud of my ancestor for his devotion to the cause, for which he declared

himself ready, having failed once, to peril his life again, and actually lost it.

“ I inherit with his blood,” said I to myself, “ all Lord Bardolfe’s sanguine temper : pray heaven, I inherit not his misfortunes !”

As I had, however, twenty miles farther to get to my journey’s end, and meant to take a hasty dinner at Alnwick, to which I was obliged to return to resume the road, I was forced to bid adieu to all these honoring reminiscences, and hurry away.

What was my surprise, on re-entering the town, to be accosted by an old Sedbergh schoolfellow, and fellow-collegian at Queen’s, of the name of Parrot, who had left us to join partnership with his father, an attorney, and was now settled at Belford, only three miles from the castle.

Though I had had no intimacy with him, and he had a sort of fluent pertness about him, not over agreeable, yet as it was not ill-natured, and he seemed sincerely glad to see me, I could not refuse his proposal (being at the same inn too) to dine together, which produced much conversation.

Having heard of my public situation, when he learned my destination, “ Hah !” said he. “ Indeed ! going to the marquess’s. Political business, I suppose. But you will be out there, I can tell you, whatever it be, for the marquess has done with politics : can’t abide ’em ; hates ’em like poison ; nay, says all politicians are rogues, and that there is more honesty in me, and Jim Juniper, the gauger, of Belford, than all the ministers put together ; and this he proves by asking us to dinner at least once a week. Fact,” added he, seeing that I looked surprised ; “ can’t do without us : that is, I don’t know for Juniper, but certainly me, who, you know, have had education like himself.”

I was stupified with surprise at this intimation, which I did not in the least know what to make of, though, from his talkativeness, I thought Parrot would explain it. I could not, however, help saying,

“ And pray, may I ask how all this came about, that you, the son of a country lawyer, whom I remember at Queen’s proud if a little country squire spoke to you, and very proud if he condescended to walk with you in the High Street, should now be the companion of a great nobleman, who, you say, cannot do without you ?”

“ O !” replied Parrot, “ the secret is a very easy one ; and, as for obligation, be assured it is perfectly mutual, if indeed the balance is not on my side.”

This beat all ; and I asked how that could be ?

“ Why, how little,” said he, “ with all your experience, do you know of the world. When you arrive, look at his frowning old castle, in the midst of the desert called his Park, to which the

approach on any side can only be over miles and miles of barren moor, so that he has not a neighbour except myself and the gauger! And as nobody will come so far to see him for any amusement Castle Dull, as I call it, can afford, do you think he is not obliged to me for my company? If I were not here, he would even put up with the gauger by himself. No, no; I was only right when I said the balance was on my side."

"I own," said I, "I should not have thought this; no disparagement to *you*, because, as you say, you are a man of education, like himself; but as to the gauger, who, I suppose, is not so lettered——"

"Lettered!" cried Parrot, "he knows no letters at all, except those he receives from the Excise Office and writes in return, and in these last I always help him with the spelling."

"But how do you account for it?" asked I; "for I have the honour of knowing the marquess, and know that he has a most accomplished mind. I know, moreover, that he has the character of being a proud man."

"Proud enough, of all conscience," interrupted my vivacious friend; "but what is pride, when he is by himself at Castle Dull, and nobody to shew it to, or even to converse with, but us and his servants? and, as for them, I should be much surprised if their master is half so happy, for there is a great deal of merriment in their hall, though none at all in his dining-room. Indeed, Jim Juniper says he would much rather drink punch with Simcoe, the butler, than claret with my lord."

"There *is* merriment then in the hall?"

"Yes; but only when my lord is out of the way, for if within hearing he stops it all."

"You quite amaze me," said I, "and I should be glad if you could account for it."

"Why, you see," returned he, "I can look as far into a millstone as another. I am sorry to say my lord marquess, though so great a man, is——"

"What?"

"Done up. Fact, I assure you. And even if I were not his confidential lawyer—that is to say, for the Northumberland estate, which, by the bye, and between ourselves—but I hope I am safe—(here he looked round the room and at the door).

"Oh, quite so," returned I; "depend upon it our conversation goes no further."

"Well, I only meant," proceeded he, "that the marquess saying all men in office are rogues, and you being one, you might——"

Here I laughed so heartily, that it stopped him. After a moment he went on, by observing,

"Even if I did not know that the Northumberland, and, as I

have heard, almost all his other property, is dipt beyond recovery—at least by him, which is enough to make any one look black—still it is easy to see that there is something else that gnaws him; and that is the reason why, after being not over amused alone, he likes to amuse himself with laughing at the gauger, who, I must say, is a neat article in his way.”

“And you?”

“O, me! Why, he has often business to talk about, and pours out his complaints to me, not only against the country bankers for being so costive about advances, but also against the world in general, particularly the politicians in it, all of whom, he says, are fools or knaves, envious, lying, and slandering, treacherous, and I know not what besides. Hence, he says, he would rather live in woods by himself, and eat nuts like a squirrel than receive and give feasts, as he used to do in London and Northamptonshire; and that’s the reason why he has shut himself up in Castle Dull, which had not been inhabited for fifty years, till he came down to it a few months ago. But mind, you are upon honour, poz, and won’t peach; for it would get me into a devil of a scrape, *being a confidential agent, you know*, if, though it be true, I were to tell the world he is done up.”

I again assured my *trusty* chum and mirror of confidants that he was safe, and thanking him for this information, which was to me very important, or might be so, in the affair I had in hand, I discharged the reckoning, and remounting my chaise, proceeded on my journey.

CHAPTER XIX.

I ARRIVE AT THE MARQUESS’S CASTLE.—AN ACCOUNT OF IT.

Go to the rude ribs of that ancient castle;
Through brazen trumpet send the breath of parle,
Into its ruin’d ears.

SHAKSPEARE.—*Richard II.*

BELFORD Castle, or Tower, for both names were common to it, was, as I have said, still twenty miles off, and it was evening (the sun being set) when I approached it. Parrot’s account of the intervening country, particularly after I got to the town of Belford, was by no means exaggerated. Such a black, naked, wet moor, or rather morass, could hardly be seen, even in the wilder parts of Northumberland. I say wilder, because the beauties of the Tyne,

the noble site of Hexham, and many other fine lines of the country, have always been admired by me.

Here, however, if a man was intent upon finding a place to increase his disgusts at the world, I thought he could not have succeeded better than the marquess, when his election fell upon the spot in which this ancestral fortress had been placed. It must have been of this bleak and iron region that old Canterbury thought, when, speculating how to secure the country from the inroads of the Scot, while Henry V. warred in France, he assures his master,

“ They of those marches, gracious sovereign,
Shall be a wall sufficient to defend
Our inland from the pilfering borderers.”

According to their present appearance, the good archbishop might rather have said, that no wall was necessary, for there was nothing to pilfer. Except, indeed, the castle itself, and the park surrounding it, abruptly starting up, like an oasis in the desert, there was nothing to be seen for miles but slate quarries and wet heather, on which browsed a score or two skeletons of cattle and stunted sheep.

By the park-gate was a mere country hovel by way of lodge, out of which issued a dirty old Hecate, to open it, without shoes or stockings, and with only one petticoat, in which, too, there was more than one rent.

When I entered the park, what struck me was, its wild and uncultivated look, though a paradise to the surrounding country. The ground plot of it was rather peculiar, composed of hills of different shapes, conical, pyramidical, and tabular, some of them of steep ascent, some presenting a dark mass of planting, others quite bare, or merely dotted with trees.

But though among these latter were some old oaks and elms, the bushes and brakes were in far greater abundance, full of wild berries, not unpicturesque at this time of year, but altogether left to nature, without a glimpse of art. There was certainly nothing like “ meadows trim and daisies pied ; ” but there were shallow brooks with fringed banks in plenty, and two or three large fish-ponds in succession, the abode of carp, tench, and wild-ducks, flocks of which last flew up as we passed, so that I thought I was on a shooting excursion on the wastes of an extensive manor, instead of approaching the mansion of a great nobleman. Even the carriage road, which had once been gravelled, had been allowed to cover itself with grass, docks, and thistles, and the quartering was desperate. The deer were as wild as all the rest, just shewing their horns and looking at us through the glades that led up the hills, and then precipitately retreating to the covert on their tops.

And yet, though not what I expected so near to the dwelling of a grandee, and what all Browns and Reptons would have been shocked with, and Price, perhaps, have written a book to prove a solecism in taste, there was something in it that pleased me. It was certainly no more than in unison with a massive, antique, and neglected tower, which looked down upon me, with no hospitable or friendly air, from the top of a steep and rocky mount, which it cost my horses infinite toil, not without danger, to ascend.

The castle itself was, however, interesting in this, that it was a real old border strong-hold, erected in the time of Edward II, and appeared, externally at least, just as it had been left in the days of Henry VII., when the ancestor of the marquess succeeded to it. It stood, as I said, upon a craggy hill, rising suddenly at the end of the park, and overlooking the sea, with a distant view of the Tweed, the white sails upon which proceeding to Berwick could in a clear day be seen. Like the Tantallon, immortalized by Scott, on the land side,

“ Its varying circle did combine
Bulwark, and bartizan, and line,
And bastion, tower, and antage coign.”

But seaward there was no need for these, for, in the language of the same poet,

“ The far projecting battlement,
The steepy rock and frantic tide,
Approach of human step denied;
And thus these lines and ramparts rude
Were left in deepest solitude.”—*Marmion*.

Deep indeed; for, unless when thronged with a numerous border garrison, its inhabitants must have led,

“ In high baronial pride,
A life both dull and dignified.”

This indeed struck me potently, when I had scaled the steep on which the Tower was situated, and saw not a creature, any more than in the long drive I had taken through the park, to give sign of habitation.

The evening was grey and solemn, the Tower looked sullen, and the union flag, which in general spread itself out to the winds that almost constantly sweep over these heights, had now dropt listlessly down, and closely lapt itself round the staff, as if from very feebleness.

I know not why the gloom, which the loneliness of the scene occasioned, got such hold of me; but I have often thought of it

since, and was carried instantly back to it, when, many years afterwards, I read in the poet I have just quoted,

“ St. George’s banner, broad and gay,
Now faded, as the fading ray
Less bright, and less was flung;
The evening gale had scarce the power
To wave it on the donjon tower,
So heavily it hung.”—*Marmion*.

Although, therefore, there was still a sort of grandeur about the place, it was an uncheerful one; and what I at first thought a pert phrase of my friend Parrot, in calling it Castle Dull, did not now appear to be absolutely unjust.

Having surmounted the steep, my chaise drove up to the massive oak gate in the Tower, studded with knobs of iron, of apparently a pound weight each. Above was a groove, in which the ribs of an old portcullis, now no longer sliding, but fixed, were still visible.

What was remarkable, instead of a bell, a huge brazen trumpet, as large as any speaking trumpet, hung by an iron chain at the side of the gate, which the post-boy, who had been more than once here since the marquess came, said was to be sounded to bring people to the door. I bade him therefore give a blast, which he did, but it brought no one; its only effect being to produce the ferocious baying of more than one blood-hound.

Except for this, and the roaring of the sea below, the stillness was uninterrupted and awful. My postilion began to misgive himself, particularly as the twilight sunk and darkness approached.

“ I have always heard strange things of this here castle,” said he, “ for no one lived in it for a hundred years, before the marcus came; and they say, in the warring times with the Scotch, prisoners have been sometimes starved to death, by being left in the vaults under this here Tower.”

“ Well, I hope,” answered I, “ this won’t be our fate; but it is odd that everybody seems to have left the house.”

“ It will be aukurd,” replied the boy, thinking of his own situation, “ to find the way back down that sharp twist, and through the dark wood.”

“ Try again at the trumpet,” said I.

“ It’s no use,” he returned, “ for the marcus, they say, do walk, often till supper time, up and down by the sea-shore, and then Mister Simcoe, the butler, he always go down to our house at Belford to be among his friends. None’s the wonder, for he have none here.”

The tramp of a horse coming up the hill was now heard, which seemed to give the boy some relief; nor was I without it myself,

for I too began to have misgivings ; not as to ghosts of starved prisoners, but lest some change or caprice in the marquess might have made him abandon his Tower, which seemed certainly sufficiently denuded of comfort to make such a measure not unreasonable.

To the postilion's great joy, the horseman, who had now come up, was Mr. Simcoe himself ; not from Belford, but from Berwick, where he had been sent by his lord, on business to the bank, and had been absent all day. As soon as he arrived, I recognised him as Lord Rochfort's major-domo in town, and he me, as one of his master's visitors. This made us acquainted, and learning from whom I came, he civilly, but doubtingly, said he *believed* my lord would see me, having come so far, but was not sure ; for he was regularly denied to all visitors whatever, even the Lord Lieutenant himself.

"But he is not at home," said I, "nor any one else, not even a maid-servant."

Mr. Simcoe smiled, and observed, that he had left his lordship confined by the gout in his hand ; and as for the maids, they never dared, when he (Mr. Simcoe) was absent, to open the gate to friend or foe, after eight o'clock. Then, taking a large whistle from his pocket, instead of applying to the trumpet, he blew it shrilly, which he said would give more certain intelligence to those within of who was without ; and in effect, a female voice having now answered, and the dogs being secured, the gate turned upon its rusty hinges, and I was, not without some satisfaction, after a long, rough day, let into the great hall of Belford Tower.

It was (I was going to say) *lighted* by an immense iron triangular machine, suspended by an iron chain, from the high embowed roof, on which an immense lamp, of the same metal, gave sign of darkness visible, rather than any thing like light ; certainly the illumination necessary to exhibit the character of this vast apartment was entirely wanting. All that I could observe in its immediate vicinity to the lamp was, that to the walls were appended a number of cross-bows and casques, and that several bats were flitting through the vault above.

Mr. Simcoe, however, who had apologized for the dimness and disappeared, now returned with a couple of wax candles, with which he preceded me through another door, not so large, but almost as strong, as that at the entrance, into what he called a dining-room, of large dimensions, but with a low and groyned ceiling. Here there were some signs of comfort : an Axminster carpet over the stone floor ; several modern easy-chairs, intermixed with ancient, straight, high-backs ; a handsome oak table, covered with a green-cloth, on which were many books ; and several pictures of ancestors, grim and grisly indeed, but some of whom had been

wardens of the marches, and made this castle their head-quarters.

In the chimney, which spread over the whole of one end of the room, were two massive iron dogues, mounted with brass, on which billets of wood were laid, in case fire were wanted, and as the night had set in drizzly and damp, Mr. Simcoe, in his care of me, immediately applied one of the candles to it, and in a moment we were in a blaze.

The hospitable butler then informed me that he had sent up one of the maids to see whether the marquess, who was a fixture on his couch with the gout, could be talked to, before he ventured to acquaint him with my arrival, but that his lordship was asleep, and he begged me therefore to wait.

All this was in very good style, and at least, if the proverb held, the behaviour of the man indicated no misanthropy in the master. The inference, however, was contradicted by what I presently observed, and which I own astonished me; for, taking up one of the bougies to look at the pictures, I saw in large old English characters, painted on a pannel over the side-board,

APEMANTUS'S GRACE.

“Immortal Gods! I crave no pelf,
I pray for no man but myself;
Grant I may never prove so fond,
To trust man on his oath or bond;
Or a harlot for her weeping;
Or a dog that seems a-sleeping;
Or a keeper with my freedom;
Or my friends, if I should need 'em.

Amen! so fall to't—

Rich men sin, and I eat root.”—*Timon of Athens*.

Expressing my surprise at this, Mr. Simcoe observed that it was thought the greatest curiosity in the castle.

“It was not then placed there by your lord?” said I.

“O dear, no; for nobody knows how old it is; only my lord ordered it to be new varnished, so as to make it more plain; and he did think of gilding the letters, he so liked the inscription, but was afraid of spoiling the antiquity of it.”

“And is there no tradition of it to be found in the castle?” asked I.

“My lord, I believe, has a book about it somewhere,” answered the civil Mr. Simcoe, “but I never took the liberty of inquiring; only Mr. Parrot, his attorney, told me that it was supposed to be put there by one of the Earls of Northumberland, to whom the place then belonged, and who, being in trouble, concealed himself here in Queen Elizabeth's time, till he went to Scotland, and

was there betrayed by all his friends, and beheaded¹. This is all I know."

"A very good account," said I, "of the inscription;" and I would have gone on with my questions, but was stopt by a maid's coming in to say the marquess was awake, and desired to see Mr. Simcoe; a summons which that gentleman immediately obeyed.

In a few minutes he returned, with his lord's compliments, and request that I would deliver the despatch I had brought from Lord Castleton to him (Simcoe), and my lord hoped to be well enough to see me the next day; meantime desired, that a bed and supper might be prepared for me, and that I would dismiss my chaise.

The latter was done, very much to the discomfort of the driver, who had been making good cheer in the buttery, and would have had no objection to have continued it during the night, instead of encountering the spirits of the Scotch prisoners starved to death in the donjon, who, all Belford believed, as they did their Bible, wandered about the park all night.

It may be supposed that I accepted the marquess's hospitality, and enjoyed a comfortable supper followed by a tumbler of Mr. Simcoe's punch, which I found the gauger (no doubt a good judge) had not overrated.

The great major-domo being talkative, as well as civil, and I sufficiently curious, I asked him if he knew any thing of the history of the castle, and whether the tradition of the post-boy, as to the starving of prisoners in the donjon was true.

He said that in one instance it was, which was quite enough to engraft a hundred others upon it. It seems that in the days of Elizabeth a prisoner was brought in, and as usual committed to the donjon by the then warder, Sir Wilfred Rochfort, an ancestor of my lord, who never parted with the keys, and who meant to dispose of him according to law. Unhappily, within an hour afterwards, he was sent for by Lord Hunsdon, governor of Berwick, to reinforce that garrison, expecting to be attacked by the Scots. The service lasted near a week, during which the prisoner was forgotten, and not remembered till the return of Sir Wilfred, whose misery may be conceived, when the unhappy man was found dead, with part of his arm eaten off by himself.

The story ended with true poetical justice, for it was said that Sir Wilfred never was his own man again. Nor was that wonderful, if the close of the legend was true; for it seems that, though

¹ The earl alluded to must have been Thomas Earl of Northumberland, who, being guilty of a little matter of rebellion in favour of Popery, took refuge, and lay concealed in different parts of the borders, till he was betrayed by Morton, Regent of Scotland, whom he had protected in his need when an exile in England. Morton delivered him up to Hunsdon, governor of Berwick, who sent him to York, where he was beheaded.

a powerful, strong man, he never could stir out alone, without encountering his victim, who shewed his bitten arm, which wielded a sword notwithstanding. With this he forced the knight to fight him, and always came off conqueror. This was proved by Sir Wilfred never returning home without his person exhibiting signs that he had been overthrown in the mire.

With this story to comfort me, I followed the relator, who now acted the part of chamberlain, up at least a hundred steps, to my bedroom, formerly a barrack for twenty men, and where many a swinkt borderer had deposited his limbs, after battling all day with moss troopers on this, or perhaps joining in a foray on the other side the Tweed.

I blessed myself as I passed through deserted chambers, or echoing passages, whose only inhabitants for years had been bats and spiders, till I laid me down in a bed, not over comfortable, and in no very good humour with my undertaking, and still less with the mode in which a disappointed marquess chose to indulge his disgusts at the world.

My regrets at this lasted some time, till they were lost in feelings still less agreeable; for I could never close my eyes but I encountered the bitten arm of the starved prisoner, and also, strange to say, the handsome mustachios of Prince Adolphus, who, with the whole train of jealous thoughts which this generated, rose perpetually and sensibly before me.

This, the shrieking of the weathercocks above, and the roaring of the sea below, rendered my night wakeful and melancholy, to say nothing of the dreary vastness of an unfurnished border castle, half in ruins, calculated for a company of a hundred brisk soldiers, but whose garrison was reduced to a gouty, discontented peer, with one male and two female menials for the whole of his retinue.

Had I been superstitious, or had any thing been on my conscience, all this would have murdered sleep; but Youth, and his younger brother, Hope, will bear up against greater difficulties than these before their buoyancy can be repressed. I succeeded, therefore, at last, in laying all spectres, of whatever kind, that endeavoured to disturb my rest, and I fell into a refreshing slumber from which I was only awakened by the sun shining in all his splendour

“From his chamber in the east.”

I immediately sprang up, and was gratified with a noble view of the German Ocean, and our good town of Berwick-upon-Tweed in the distance.

While dressing, the attentive Simcoe came in to administer to my wants, and told me his lord was better, and hoped to get down

stairs after breakfast. Meantime, looking round at the sorry equipment of the room, he expressed fears that my night could not have been comfortable.

“Rather different, Sir, this, from Grosvenor Square,” said he, “and still more from the house and fine gardens of Beaulieu, my lord’s grand place in Northamptonshire. When we shall get away from this, and return there, I don’t know. But, Lord! Sir, I am glad you’re come, for I hope it is to take his lordship back again from this sad place, where he has nobody to speak to but a vulgar exciseman, and nothing to do but dig in his garden—for he actually does both—great nobleman as he is. I am sure if I had not known him, man and boy, these twenty years, I would not stay in this wild place an hour; no servants but two maids, and a groom and gardener out of doors. I know my lord as well, and better, than he does himself, and for all his talk about that Apemantus over the side-board, and not trusting man or woman, I am sure he will never do out of London or Beaulieu. What can be the reason of it, I can’t find out, but I do hope, Sir, you have brought him some good news, for nothing else will cure his gout.”

“And will that do it, Mr. Simcoe?” asked I.

“I don’t know, Sir, but I wish there never was such a thing as a newspaper; for he takes them all in, and never reads one but it makes him worse. But as you are now dressed, I will, if you please, go and prepare your breakfast; though I fear you will never find the way down without me, so if you please I will stop and shew you.”

Feeling that he was right, I gladly accepted the offer, and followed him down, as I had followed him up, through a labyrinth of passages and stair-cases, till I found myself again seated under Apemantus’s Grace, in the dining-room. I read it again, and agreed with the sagacious Simcoe, that he knew his lord as well, if not better, than he did himself, when he professed to admire such a piece of cynicism.

Breakfast over, I began to be anxious for the sight of the noble hermit who so distrusted his species. In fact, from what I saw, notwithstanding its want of keeping, I was fearful lest the feudal interest about the place and the self-flattery of every man who pretends to despise the world, might influence him to be obstinate, at least for a while, against all overtures to bring him back.

Of his total unfitness for the life he had chosen, except while under the operation of his spleen, I was as convinced as Mr. Simcoe himself. Oh! what a contrast to the really philosophic and self-sufficing Manners, and how different this gloomy castle from the cheerful Grange!

CHAPTER XX.

OF MY INTERVIEW WITH THE MARQUESS, AND THE INTERESTING CONVERSATION
I HAD WITH HIM.

How now, my lord, why do you keep alone,
Of sorriest fancies your companions making!

SHAKSPEARE.—*Macbeth*.

This is in thee a nature but affected,
A poor, womanly melancholy, sprung
From change of fortune. Why this spade? this place?
This slave-like habit, and these looks of care?

Timon of Athens.

AT length, from a sort of bustle in the hall, I concluded that the marquess was approaching, and he presently entered, leaning on Simcoe. Neither the gout, nor his savage abode, nor even his new companions, Parrot and the gauger, had taken from him his natural politeness; and, though strangely arrayed in a sort of Flushing pilot coat, with a coarse handkerchief round his neck, and canvass trousers on his legs, he could not divest himself of that air of a man of quality which belonged to him.

The butler having withdrawn, "You are welcome," said he, shaking hands with me, "to such comfort as my poor house can afford—bad, I am afraid, at best, and Simcoe gives a deplorable account of your quarters last night; but it suits a banished man."

"Banished!" I exclaimed.

"Yes, banished; not by law, but the world, which I have endeavoured to serve; and not the first whom it has so rewarded;—as that book, the only one I now read, will prove any hour of the day."

And he pointed to a large old folio edition of Plutarch, printed in the time of James I., which lay open on a table.

"To be sure," said I, "there are too many instances in ancient story of the ingratitude of nations—Themistocles, Aristides, and Cicero—though the latter had been voted the father of his country; and above all, Camillus, after being five times dictator. But I trust your lordship will not fix that stain upon the people of England, who honour you, present or absent."

"No," said he, quickly, "not upon the people, who, upon the whole, are honest enough: but what shall we say to the vile in-

trigues of mean courtiers, who blind their king, or to the king himself, for consenting to be blinded ? ”

“ Those I come from,” replied I, “ as your lordship well knows, are not of that description.”

“ I believe Castleton is an honest man,” returned he ; “ but he is swayed by knaves or fools, whom he prefers to the person whom yet he consults, and whose assistance he condescends to *crave*.”

He said this proudly, with an emphasis on the word *crave*, and, as I thought, with a smile of bitter satisfaction.

“ With submission, your lordship may find that the *preference* you suppose neither does nor can exist, and that such preference is not compatible with that sense of your superiority, which has alone subjected you to the trouble of this mission.”

He received my compliment complacently enough, adding, with sufficient grace of manner, that whatever answer he might be forced to give to Lord Castleton’s despatch, he could not help thanking him for the messenger he had chosen to convey it.

This was too civil not to be recognised by a profound bow, particularly when he added, “ Lord Castleton tells me you have his entire confidence on this occasion, and I shall therefore not scruple to give you mine, if only as the best mode of answering his application. He knows how long I have been disgusted with courts, from their false estimation of those who follow them, and how long I have meditated such a retreat as this. Tell him, therefore, though late, I am here the *courtisan détrompé du monde*, and exclaim with him,

“ En vain pour satisfaire à nos lâches envies
Nous passons près des rois tout le temps de nos vies,
A souffrir des mépris et plier les genoux.
Ce qu’ils peuvent n’est rien ; ils sont comme nous sommes,
De véritables hommes,
Et meurent comme nous.”

“ Your lordship will pardon me,” I replied, “ if I remind you of that part of Lord Castleton’s letter, in which he states, that when your country wants you, you have no right to such a retreat.”

“ A sorry one, God wot,” observed he, looking at his own dress, and the homeliness of the room ; “ but for the wants of the country read those of the cabinet, and you will be nearer the truth. In return for which, tell me what the cabinet has ever done for *me*, that I should help *them*, or what they *would* do for me, if they could stand alone. I own this meanness only makes me more in love with these bare walls, in which, rough and weather-beaten as they are, I breathe an honester atmosphere than surrounds their

palaces. Pray, are you much acquainted with Raleigh—his poetry I mean? Did you ever read his *Lye*?”

“An odd subject.”

“But well treated, and full of philosophy. Excuse me if I refer a stanza or two to your examination, and then say if I am wrong:—

‘Tell men of high condition,
That rule affairs of state,
Their purpose is ambition,
Their practice only hate;
And if they once reply,
Then give them all the lye.’

Feeling this, can you wonder at my resolution, or at my reaping what I promised myself from it?

“I again say, therefore, tell them how you found me: and, but for my disorder, you would have found me with this mattock in my garden—(here he took up a spade, which stood in a corner of the room)—which, like Abdolonymus, I would not quit to be a king.”

Had I not thought he was deceiving himself, this speech would have staggered me, for he, at least, *looked* very firm. Yet from what I had heard of him, I *did* think him self-deceived, and would not yield. Addressing him, therefore, more solemnly, I said,

“Had I been sent to an ordinary character, my lord, I might feel forced to retire with this answer; but as I am very sure that you love your country too well to abandon her when she needs your known powers, merely because you feel injured by individuals, who, Lord Castleton himself allows, cannot compare with you,—forgive me if I endeavour to combat your resolution.”

“Well, Sir,” he replied, “to shew you that my conduct proceeds from rational determination, and not capricious disgust, I am ready to hear you.”

“It is only what I expected, as well as hoped,” returned I. “Your lordship mentioned characters in history ungratefully treated by their country. Do not resemble them only in that. Recollect how they stifled their resentments when their country wanted them. You have yourself shewn me an important volume of examples in this respect (and I opened the Plutarch he had pointed at). Do not refuse to be the Aristides, and, above all, the Camillus of that book. Their banishment did not prevent them from listening to the voice of their rivals, when they wanted their aid; or from delivering their native land from the evils that threatened it.”

“Excellent,” said he, with a sarcastic air. “You have not, I see, been at Oxford, any more than at Castleton’s right hand, for nothing. Know then, were the Gaul or the Persian at the gates, I

would, like Camillus or Aristides, arm to repel them : but to help a set of ordinary pretenders (you know I mean not Castleton), merely to keep offices with which they have no business—too jealous to act with me, too weak to do without me—would be little resembling the patriots you so much wish me to follow.”

“ And yet your lordship,” returned I, “ resembles Camillus in more than one respect, which has perhaps escaped you.”

“ I understand not your meaning,” said he, with some curiosity, as I turned over Plutarch.

“ Permit me,” I replied, having found the passage I wanted, “ to read the following account. ‘ As he (Camillus) departed from the city, he turned to the Capitol, and, stretching forth his hands, prayed the gods that if, without any fault of his own, but merely through the malice and violence of the people, he was driven into banishment, the Romans might quickly have cause to repent of it, and that all mankind might visibly perceive that they needed his assistance, and longed for his return.’ ”

With all his resentments, I saw this did not displease Lord Rochfort, for, laughing at the comparison I had discovered,

“ Upon my word,” said he, “ I cannot but compliment Lord Castleton upon his ambassador. I should only be glad if our foreign diplomacy were as well filled as our domestic. It would be hard now if such adroitness should fail, and I not think myself Camillus after all. But no ; as the Gaul is not at the gate, I will not be drawn out of this retreat, which seems now as strong a fortress against English envy, hatred and malice, lying and slandering, treachery and ingratitude, as it formerly was against Scotch rapine and moss-trooping insolence. It was this that made me prefer it to the silk and down of Beaulieu, which attracted many a rascal. In truth, I believe I was born two, perhaps three centuries too late ; for when I first arrived here, and traversed my vast and empty hall, and beheld my ancestors’ helmets, crowned with pennons waving in the wind, and read under them how many had been sheriffs of the county, how many had led their vassals to Scotland or Wales, how many to Aquitaine, I felt my heart dilate, and fear I despised myself for having been born in so changed a time. For, instead of belonging to a band of warriors (robbers though they might be), I felt I was now making one of a nation of pedlars, governed by a clique of men only fit to be gentlemen ushers ; and I paced the cold floor of the apartment which contained these monuments of former importance, with my disgust at the world increased a hundred-fold. I shivered, it is true, in a place where once whole trees flamed to illumine and warm its master and his men ; but shivering one’s self was better than warming crowds of the ungrateful, the designing, and the envious. Here, said I,

‘Feel I but the penalty of Adam,
The difference of the seasons. As the icy fang
And churlish chiding of the winter’s wind,
Which when it bites and blows upon my body,
E’en till I shrink with cold, I smile and say,
These are no flatterers.’ ”

He said this with an animation which shewed that, for the moment, at least, he was no counterfeit, adding, in the same tone, “Why should I leave it? My poor ancestor, Lord Northumberland, paid a severe penalty for doing so; but though one’s head is safer in these times, we are blessed with the same struggles among statesmen, the same intrigues, and the same treachery. Look here,” concluded he, pointing to Apemantus’s inscription—

“‘Rich men sin, and I eat root.’ ”

In this humour, I found it in vain to oppose him; for I had already discovered, in my commerce with the world, that opposition to a favourite, though perhaps but a temporary opinion, only gives it strength, and so I held my peace.

After a pause of some minutes, he resumed the talk.

“It was amusing,” said he, “after my first arrival here, to observe the speculations which were hazarded as the cause of my retreat, by a set of blockheads, who knew nothing about me, or knaves, who were paid for abusing me. One said I had run-out my fortune, and had come here to retrench; and there may be a worse cause assigned than that. (Here Lord Rochfort reddened a little, as if not liking to glance at such a thing.) Another did me the honour, at my years, to say that I was *éperdument épris* with a beautiful country girl, whom, from fear of rivals, I had immured with myself in this old castle, and never allowed her air or exercise, except upon the battlements. A third asserted that I had offended the king, by turning my back upon him in the closet, because he would not make me prime minister; and the writer called upon all loyal subjects to support his Sacred Majesty in resenting this affront. This was in the Duke of E.’s paper; but I had ample revenge in his miserable mismanagement of his department, for which he is deservedly censured.”

“Your lordship,” observed I, “at least notes, and is interested with what is passing in the world, although so far retreated from it. May we not hope, then, that the time will come, when you may be willing to return to it?”

“Never,” returned he, “while that world is what it is. My intention, as my wish, is to live and die here.”

“Without companions! without interests! no pursuits! no amusements! How can that be, with your lordship’s mind?”

“That very mind is your answer. As to companions, to one who has taken a true measure of the world, Belford, mean and inconsiderable as it is, and Berwick, immersed in trade and herrings, afford quite as much companionship (philosophically speaking) as London, though it holds its head so high. All are rogues; but these are honester rogues than you Londoners. A man cannot here so well smile, and smile, and be a villain; he lets you detect him at once. Besides, have I not the sea?—enough to satisfy any lover of change.”

“I meant not to speak of the honesty of the natives,” said I, “but their companionship: and where, among them, shall we find a companion for Lord Rochfort?”

“Very fine,” said he, assuming an air almost stern; “but what right, young gentleman, have you to think you can cajole me with such gewgaw compliments? Look I as if I were still one of the fools of the world, snuffing incense from the rogues of it? or as if, in fact, I was still in the House of Lords? Observe this *roupe*: does it look like a peer’s robe? Observe these brogues: do they belong to a knight of the carpet? Handle this spade, it raised those roots (and he pointed through the window at the garden): does it give you reason to think I am one of the blind silk-worms you have left? No; I may be a worm; but a worm is an honest crawler of the earth, and not easily tempted from his hole by being told he is a beauty.”

I own I felt abashed; for, with new habits and ideas, he had either learned, or invented, a new language; one which certainly did not encourage an attempt at persuasion.

Shewing, perhaps, my sense of this, he added, with a sort of ironical laugh, “Come, I think I am more likely to convert you, than you me. What a triumph to philosophy, if the ambassador who came to tempt the hermit back again to court, to dainty dishes and silken sheen, should himself turn hermit,

‘Drink the clear stream, and nothing wear but frieze.’

Oh! it would be divine poetical justice; like the prince robbing Falstaff—‘Argument for a week, laughter for a month, and a good jest for ever.’ *Allons*,” added he, still laughing most complacently at the thought, “here is a pen and ink; sit down and write to Lord Castleton, one of my treatises *de contemptu mundi*. Tell him the delights and comforts, but above all, the independence, of a border castle. Tell him that, like Cicero, I count the waves on the shore, and think it gives better amusement than the waves he is

forced to watch in town. Or say that, like Lælius and Scipio, I make ducks and drakes with pebbles—far better than making them with guineas, as I used to do. Acquaint him how much better you find it to dig one's own potatoes without an opposition at every stroke, than to keep awake one night, for fear of being out-voted the next. Come, begin; Pope shall supply you with the two first lines, and you will then go glibly on—

‘Awake, my Castleton, leave meaner things
To low ambition and the pride of kings.’ ”

Here, still laughing at his own wit, he presented me with a pen and sheet of paper, and with mock earnestness desired me to commence.

I own I felt discomposed, if not displeased, but had too much command of myself to shew it. I, however, could not help saying, “I am glad to find that this exile has not deprived your lordship of your wit and merriment, though they are exhibited at the expense of friends who honour and love you. Lord Castleton does not so exercise his imagination, but laments your loss, and has never ceased to do so since your retreat; laments it, not more for his own sake, than that of the state.”

“Which I am supposed unfit to direct,” interrupted the marquess, loftily.

“Not by Lord Castleton,” replied I, “nor by any means all whom, for the sake of the country, he feels forced to act with. But at least what he says ought to be well weighed, before your lordship dismisses me with such severe banter.”

“And what says his sagacious lordship?” asked Lord Rochfort.

“Why, that to fly from the field where alone your powers can be shewn is not the way to prove their superiority, so as to make all men regret you as well as himself. If I may presume to add any thing of my own to this, I would ask leave to remind you of the maxim of statesmen and moralists, as well as lawyers, ‘*De non apparentibus et non existentibus, eadem est ratio.*’ ”

“There may be something in that,” said he, quickly, and he somewhat changed. Then, as if soliloquising, and at intervals, which I did not like to interrupt, he said, in a lower tone, “I believe Castleton loves me—is honourable and open—no tricks or backbiting—much respected by the king, though not perhaps first in favour—ought to be supported—yet ridiculous if——”

Here he made a full stop, which lasted so long that I could not help asking, “If what, my lord marquess? Surely such a word as ridiculous can never be applied to any thing Lord Rochfort could do which he felt to be right.”

“ I must do you the justice,” said he, in reply, “ to say I honour the temper you have shewn under taunts which I had no right to indulge, whatever my determination ; nor does Castleton deserve such a reception of his frank communication. I own, too, there is a great deal in what you last observed ; still it would be ridiculous in the eye of the world, and it would not be lost upon my ill-wishers, if, like a pouting boy or girl, I appeared to have fled away only to be brought back. This shall never be said—as it certainly would be if I returned, and the cabinet remained the same. As a sort of *mezzo termine*, however, and to shew that I wish well to Lord Castleton personally, I will give him my proxy, which, on taking leave of politics, as I intended, for ever, I declined to do by anybody. And, in doing this, let me tell you I make a considerable advance ; nor would I do it if I did not entirely approve the measures he has communicated to me.”

“ O ! my lord,” said I, “ pause not here ; do not a good thing by halves. Your superiority to the duke is so acknowledged, that you have but to appear, to reap the fruits of it. It is not impossible that he may consent to take a high court office, which, though it remove him from the government, will bring him nearer to the king. This will be more agreeable to both, and thus all parties will be satisfied.”

“ If I thought that,” said Lord Rochfort—“ but, then, the ridicule——”

“ And has Lord Rochfort,” I exclaimed, “ so little weight in the country—is he so little known in the world, or of so low a reputation, as to fear ridicule, which, even if attempted, he would shake off as a dew-drop from a lion’s mane ? It is for little people to be afraid of ridicule.”

“ Upon my faith,” replied the marquess, “ I must repeat my felicitation to Lord Castleton upon having so good a second ; and but that it would spoil your’s, to come to *me*, I could envy him his good fortune in having such a secretary.”

I blushed at these words, not certainly altogether from modesty, for they kindled ambitious hopes ; and ambitious hopes, and some others, had been always so united in me, that the association, spite of all that had occurred, had not yet been severed.

At that instant the great trumpet at the gate sounded. “ It is the post,” said Lord Rochfort, looking at his watch.

The letters were brought in. One, signed Castleton, another on mourning paper. The marquess begged me to excuse him, and was leaving the room ; but I requested leave to visit the garden, which I had not seen, and left him to his letters, alone.

CHAPTER XXI.

OF THE EXTRAORDINARY AND IMPORTANT PROPOSAL THE MARQUESS MADE ME, AND MY HOPE OF OVERCOMING HIS SCRUPLES.

This strained passion doth you wrong, my lord ;
Sweet earl, divorce not wisdom from your honour.

SHAKSPEARE.—2 *Henry IV.*

I AM absolutely astonished to find myself at the commencement of the fourth volume of my memoirs, though I am barely entering into my twenty-fifth year, and have had no particular adventures. Indeed, with the exception of being knocked on the head by a poacher, and advertised in the *Hue and Cry* as a house-breaker, I feel as if I had exhibited myself as the merest common-place person that ever attempted auto-biography.

And yet there may be some characters traced, some feelings developed, some question of consequence to our nature discussed, which may be thought interesting by those who can understand them. To those alone I write, and not to the thousand insects who look only to amuse themselves in the gilded sunbeams of the marvellous (whether in or out of nature), and who read more to avoid the trouble of thinking than to cultivate thought.

To return to my narration ; the garden at Belford Tower little deserved its name, at least according to our southern ideas. The culinary herbs absolutely necessary for a rough northern dinner of bannocks and kail were all of which it seemed ambitious. The notion that there were such things as flowers seemed never to have been entertained ; and, as it was spacious, stretching round three sides of the hill on which the castle stood, some large intervals between the beds were filled with oats, which were very flourishing.

The contrast between this and the Northamptonshire gardens, so praised by Mr. Simcoe, only proved still more the determined change of humour which his disgusts had effected in the mind of its possessor. A few stunted apple trees languished amid some yews ; which last, however, were wide-spreading, and perhaps five hundred years old. These were, seemingly, the only signs that ornament or shelter had ever been thought of by the former owners of the castle.

One, and one only, interesting object presented itself, in what I

took for the remains of a stone-quarry, but which had formerly been an oratory, half hid by two large yews, and constructed of rock and pebbles from the sea-shore. It was kept in tolerable preservation, for the sake, as I afterwards learned, of an inscription on a slate tablet, supposed to have been engraved for that Earl of Northumberland of whom, as having lost his head for the sake of Queen Mary and Popery, mention has been made already. It must have been composed just before he felt forced to leave this retreat for a still more dangerous one among the Scottish borderers, who betrayed him. It ran thus :

“ How long shall fortune fail me nowe,
And harrowe me with fear and dreede?
How long shall I in vale abide,
In misery my life to lead ?

“ To fall fra bliss, alas ! the while,
It was my sair and heavye lott;
And I must leave my native land,
And I must live a man forgot '.”

While this engaged me, a proper pendant, I thought, for Ape-mantus's Grace (both of them seeming so apposite to the present condition and humour of the marquess), Mr. Simcoe brought his lord's compliments and request to see me, as he was afraid, with his gout, of the damp of the garden.

I found him still in the dining-room, which indeed, and his bed-chamber, were the only rooms in the castle fit for a Christian to live in, and only filled me with wonder that he should have remained in them so long (nearly seven months) without flinching.

He seemed in deep reflection when I came in, with both his letters open on the table.

“ I know not,” said he, “ whether these will assist your object of calling me back to the world, but they shew me (I do not thank them for it) that I have still some business in it which I cannot neglect. Pray heaven it take me not away. In a word, Mr. Courtall, my member (*my* member, observe), who did not choose either to follow my lead or to vacate (no doubt for conscience' sake), is gone to get his reward. He is dead, and a new writ must be moved without delay. Lord Castleton presses me for a nomination; which, little dreaming I should again care for it, I am not prepared to give. Yet if I don't, and immediately too, or perhaps go myself to oppose an opposition, I may lose this precious bubble, and then——”

Here he paused.

¹ This is to be found in the ancient ballad, “ *Northumberland betrayed by Douglas.*”

Percy, 1. 220.

"I wait your lordship's meaning," said I.

"Why, then, my Lord Castleton, or my lord anybody, will not trouble themselves to send their secretaries after me—that is all."

I immediately combated this, by shewing him (in which I was most sincere) that the wish for him was personal, and not for his parliamentary interest; which was proved by the fact that all his friends had supported the government, though he had retired.

"You are armed, I see, at all points," he observed, "and no time must be lost, for the post starts in two hours, and if I were to go up myself, which I could not if I would, and would not if I could, I should be too late, with this gout hanging about me.—Even this," continued he, "seems to have fallen out on purpose to vex me, for you see I cannot hold a pen."

On this, I ventured to say that if he would forgive the presumption, which I only entertained from his having promised me the honour of his confidence, I should be happy to take down his answer from his own dictation.

His answer astounded as well as affected me.

"You say well," said he; "and it will be convenient, and the less liable to objection; because, as I must give a name, I know no one at this moment which I would sooner adopt than your own. The experience I have had of all others effectually prevents me from thinking of the hacks of the world. You at least seem virgin, and of your fitness this very visit leaves me without a doubt."

I was penetrated and overpowered; knew not how to answer, still less what to decide. So many things to consider—my own prospects—my situation with Lord Castleton—Lord Castleton himself.

"Come," said the marquess, seeing me embarrassed, "decide, for, as I tell you, no time must be lost."

"Of that I am aware," returned I, "but your lordship must give me leave to collect my ideas, which are all scattered; first, by this most extraordinary mark of favour, for which I know not how to thank you; but next (to say nothing of my ignorance of my own fitness), the absolute necessity of knowing the sentiments of Lord Castleton, to whom I belong—more especially as your lordship has not signified your decision on his offers, nor in what light, politically, you regard his application. Ignorant of what answer I am to take back, will it be justifiable in me, who am in his service and devoted to his politics, to appear to have even listened to the proposal (however honourable and undeserved) of one who is at least not yet identified with him in his plan of action?"

"Fairly answered," said he; "and only confirms the opinion I just now expressed, that you were virgin in the world. To relieve you, therefore (to say nothing of saving the post), you shall give your name only conditionally; and if Lord Castleton objects, you

shall vacate. Not only this, but, if he approves and you remain permanently in, I absolve you from all obligation, which, as a man of honour, you might think yourself under, to follow my lead instead of Lord Castleton's. Indeed, I begin to think I am scarcely separated from him in any of his views ; and though my *personal* objections to unite with his government, in form, remain where they were, yet upon the particular measure he refers to me, I should have but one objection to make against it, besides the long journey, in my state of health, that would be necessary to enable me to support it."

I felt myself leap for joy at the mere prospect of this, and eagerly asked what was his one objection ?

"The fear of the world," answered he ; "not, as from your countenance you perhaps think, that it should reconcile me to it, but that I should hate it more. God knows I hate it enough, and retain such people as Parrot and Juniper, whom I see there, climbing the hill, merely to have something to laugh at, and keep me, by that semblance of cheerfulness, from turning an absolute savage. By the way, their visit is extremely *mal à propos*, and I'll wager that fellow Parrot, who is as inquisitive and gossiping as a village barber, has heard you are here, and will never rest till he finds out why."

Here I thought it but just to my old acquaintance to inform his patron of my having met him at Alnwick, if only to account for his knowledge that I was here.

"*N'importe*," said the marquess ; "he has no business to be here except by appointment ; he has presumed, too, of late, more upon the necessity I have for him in business than I choose, and must have a rap of the knuckles."

"May I ask the character of his companion," said I, "whom he represented as so greatly inferior, that he said, nothing but your lordship's want of society could make you tolerate him?"

"He is an impudent hound," replied Lord Rochfort, "for, of the two, Juniper is far the superior in real sense, though coarse and abrupt in manner, more especially towards the lawyer himself, and at the very moment when he thinks he has most shewn his superiority. It diverts me to set one against the other ; and would now, but that we are better employed. Both are vulgar—both parasites ; Parrot tries to disguise—Juniper does not conceal it ; Parrot thinks himself a gentleman—Juniper knows he is but a gauger. But to return to our subject, I own that one objection I have to the world is the fear I have of hating it more even than I do."

"Fear not, my lord," I replied ; "for I will venture to affirm that these thoughts are not really deserved. The court, I allow, has

treated you ill, but you are too good to visit the sins of the court on the world at large. Return to it, and it will do you justice."

"Let us first see what Don Castleton will say to our letters," replied he, "which you must now lose no time in writing."

This was true; so at his dictation I wrote with hurried feelings a paragraph on myself, as the ground of his wish for me to succeed Mr. Courtall; and a long letter of my own, being a sort of journal of all that had occurred since I had been at the castle, and in particular the whole of my conversation with the marquess, in all its bearings, on the subject of his return.

Long before I had done, the auxiliaries, Parrot and Juniper, had applied to the gate trumpet for admittance, and were told by a message, in no very measured terms, through Simcoe, to employ themselves in the garden till my lord had finished the business he was upon.

Juniper obeyed by reposing himself in Simcoe's room; Parrot, disdaining such abasement, demanded the last newspaper, with which he amused himself on the parapet of the castle wall overlooking the German Sea.

CHAPTER XXII.

OF THE STRANGE COMPANIONS THE MARQUESS HAD CHOSEN IN HIS RETIREMENT, AND THE THRALDOM OF SUPERIORS WHO HAVE INTRUSTED SECRETS TO INFERIORS.

Because that I familiarly, sometimes,
Do use you for my fool, and chat with you,
Your sauciness will jest upon my love,
And make a common of my serious hours.
When the sun shines let foolish gnats make sport,
But creep in crannies when he hides his beams.

SHAKSPEARE.—*Comedy of Errors*.

ON the admission of the illustrious associates, so important to his happiness, that, as Parrot had told me, Lord Rochfort could not do without them, I was curious (especially after what the marquess had said of them) to mark their reception.

My fellow-student exhibited himself very frankly as the *enfant de famille* of the place—rather, perhaps, I might say, the major-domo, prime minister, confidant, and groom of the chambers; in one word—factotum.

The consciousness of this made him but ill bear the dishonouring stigma conveyed to him through Simcoe, in the prohibition to

enter till his chief sent for him. This I could see had affected him not a little when he joined us, to which I also saw that my presence had not a little contributed.

Our equality at Queen's would not allow him to brook what he held to be an indignity, which he seemed resolved to make up for by a more than usual familiarity as to the ways and routine of the castle, and in his behaviour to the lord of it.

To this the shrewd gauger was a most marked contrast. Like Sir Pertinax, he seemed not able to stand upright in the presence of the great man, but bowed at every word and every look; and "my lord marquess," and "your lordship," was never off his tongue. The tyranny, however, with which the lawyer pretended to treat him, sharpened by the reception he had met with when he most wished to shine, was evidently resented by the gauger, who seemed only lying by for an opportunity to revenge himself. He chuckled, therefore, at the marquess's answer to Parrot's first address to him.

That glib gentleman, assuming an ease and familiarity which surprised me the more because it was clearly by no means pleasing to the noble lord he addressed, accosted him thus :—

"Having heard Mr. Clifford was here, and knowing how out of humour you are with unexpected intruders, I thought you might want a little assistance in receiving him, so Juniper and I came up——"

"To restore my good humour, I suppose," said Lord Rochfort, drily. "Upon my word, I am infinitely obliged by your protection of me."

"There now," said the gauger, "I telled you how it would be; you see my lord marquess did not want none of your help, and would rather have your room nor your company, especially as he have got a real gentleman with him on business."

"Real gentleman! you booby," replied Parrot; "why, I thought, on account of that very gentleman, I might be of the more use, because Mr. Clifford and I were fellow-students at Oxford; and it's always pleasant to break formality by the mutual knowledge people have of one another's history and habits, to say nothing of old stories, jokes, and witticisms."

"Of the value of which," said Lord Rochfort, still more drily, "from the brilliant specimens I have long had of them, and particularly at this moment, it is impossible to doubt."

At this the gauger, who at least had wit enough to see when wit could, or could not, be endured, seeing Parrot about to reply, pulled him by the coat skirts, and in a not low whisper said, "Coom, Parrot, doanty be so fond of talking, and shewing thy parts; dost not see his lordship be busy, and don't want us this

morning? I telled thee so, but thee would not believe me. Coom, let us make our boo, and be ganging."

"Why, the business between Mr. Clifford and me," observed the marquess, "is certainly sufficiently interesting to require no addition from the wit of a Belford attorney. I am sorry, therefore (though ineffably grateful), for the trouble you have taken to assist my inexperience in receiving company."

"I am sure your lordship knows," replied Parrot, somewhat, but not much, abashed, "that I can never think it trouble to be of use to my friends."

"I am sure of it," returned the marquess, in the same dry tone; "for I am, and always shall be, ready to confess, that even without a fee, 'if you were as tedious as a king, you could find it in your heart to bestow it all on my lordship.'"

"By dad, you had it there," said Juniper, giggling, and bowing to the lord of the castle, who could not help laughing outright, in which I could as little help joining.

"I beg pardon," at last said the lawyer; "I only thought, hearing that Mr. Clifford had come upon business, that, as your lordship's attorney, I might be wanted; so here I am."

"I thank you most profoundly," returned the marquess; "and yet think I could be well content 'to be my own attorney in this case.'"

"Ah! now I see you are at your quotations again," replied Parrot, "and you know I never can stand you there."

"Nor anywhere else," interrupted the gauger, "for all that you may think."

"My lord does not want you for a second," said Parrot, peevishly.

"Not against *thee*, certainly," replied Juniper.

"His lordship knows how to distinguish between us," rejoined the attorney, with an air of contempt; "and, at any rate, is sure of my readiness, on all occasions, to take his commands."

"No doubt; no doubt; and charge them afterwards in your bill," said the gauger—"He! He!"

Lord Rochfort, though amused almost to laughing at these hits of the gauger, thought it necessary to come to the assistance of the man of law, against the man of gin, though he did not much relieve him when he observed,

"My good Parrot, you are the most obliging of talking birds."

At which Juniper giggled aloud, and, bowing again and again to the marquess, exclaimed,

"Now that's so good of your lordship. Yes; certainly a Parrot be a talking bird."

Parrot, though furious with his companion, became *almost* disconcerted, and again said he only came in his capacity of attor-

ney, in which, he added significantly, and as I thought, maliciously, "Your lordship has at least found me useful at Newcastle, where you sent me three days ago, and whence I only returned last night, with the answers from Messieurs Surtees—which, by the way, I ought to have reported at first—that they (here he affected to whisper Lord Rochfort) could not honour any more of your——"

"Impertinent blockhead," cried the marquess, in a sudden rage, and stopping him; "is this impudence possible? You say you are my attorney—you are much fitter to be the town crier. I dismiss you from my service and concerns. Go, and return no more."

"As you please, my lord," replied the lawyer, who felt that he had the best house in Belford, and nobody to compete with him—"as you please," said he, summoning up his courage, which had been a little disconcerted at my presence, "and when I send in my bill, I hope——"

"Impudent cur, depart this instant," cried the marquess, in a fit of passion which I did not think could belong to him.

"I telled you how it would be," said the gauger, softly changing his tones as they both left the room.

"Is not this intolerable?" exclaimed Lord Rochfort, when they were gone. "To be bearded by such a reptile, an idiot, unworthy to be trusted, though in a profession requiring all trust. His insolence, I fear, has made me forget myself. I have to beg your pardon and my own. But you know not, Mr. De Clifford, the curse it is to be forced to rely on such base minds, whether as confidants in business, or companions. How have I been mistaken in supposing they would amuse my retirement! No; I retract all I have said of the merits of my associates, and the preference I persuaded myself to shew them. It has almost tempted me to return with you to the world, and even to court it, though I have called myself *le courtisan détrompé du monde*."

I hailed this confession as a good augury of success for my mission, and told him so; adding my astonishment at the companions he had condescended to adopt in exchange for those he had repudiated, who, if not more honest or less selfish, had at least better manners.

"The sauciness, mixed with submission, of Juniper did not," said I, "surprise me; but I own I was shocked at the familiarity you permitted in that forward and conceited *fellow-student* of mine."

"I have confessed," said Lord Rochfort, "that it was my own fault; nor shall it occur again. Yet what am I to do? I have neglected every one in the shape of a gentleman who has called upon me in this Siberia, meaning to put up, and indeed to identify myself,

with the natives. But I begin to believe, though I scarcely own it to myself, that I am not made for Kamtschatka."

"Your lordship is made only for the world," answered I, "and ought immediately to return to it, if only to shake off the impertinence of such a troublesome coxcomb as Parrot, to say nothing of his unworthiness as to trust."

"You say true," answered the marquess, "and I will think of it."

He then fell into a fit of musing, which, not being convenient to indulge in company, he withdrew to his chamber above stairs, which I heard him pacing for at least a quarter of an hour, when I suppose he sat down, as it ceased.

It was something gained to have induced him even to think of abandoning his retreat; though I was forced to confess that what Lord Castleton's proposals, backed by my fine arguments, could not effectually produce, was likely to be accomplished by a piece of impertinence from a pragmatistical coxcomb whom he despised. In this he reminded me of a trait in the life of Lord Buckhurst, first Earl of Dorset, who, being idle and extravagant, and forced to borrow money of a scrivener, was so disgusted and indignant at being kept by him waiting too long before he would see him, that he resolved to get rid of that thralldom by taking to business, which he did so effectually, that, being very able, he succeeded Burleigh as lord treasurer to Queen Elizabeth.

I longed, but dared not, to bring this anecdote before Lord Rochfort. He, however, seemed to follow Lord Buckhurst's example without knowing the story.

"This fellow," said he, upon rejoining me, "presumes to be offensive, on the strength of knowing some of my affairs, and my having employed him in pecuniary negotiations. But of all dependencies, deliver me from that of being in the power of vulgar minds, who think they have a secret which you wish to conceal. The scoundrel shall be disappointed, for I will myself discover it. I will allow the world to know, if it pleases, that I am embarrassed. If nothing else, my seclusion in this old tower, and this frugal life, have taught me that gold is not necessary for happiness, as gold itself had shewed me before that it could not command success in our wishes. Could I therefore with this spade discover a hidden treasure, like the real Timon whom Castleton says I imitate, I would say with him,

'Come, damned earth,
Thou common whore of mankind, that putt'st odds
Among the rout of nations, I will make thee
Do thy right nature.'

In fact, I would bury it again, for fear it should tempt me again to rebel against its true uses."

For this I honoured him, and ventured to set before him how much better it was to employ his talents in serving the state, even though every thing might not go according to his wishes, than abandoning the world, as he had done, to be affronted by such a coxcomb as Parrot.

As I was apologizing for this liberty, which I really felt to be too great, he stopped me, and, with much kindness of manner, told me he was only the more obliged to me.

“No,” said he; “having recovered my senses, such a representation ought to be the reverse of offensive, from you, however lowering the behaviour of the fool who has left us. But I really beg for time to look about me, for I feel I have a number of crude notions that want setting in order. Do me the favour, therefore, to leave me to myself till dinner-time, and meanwhile Simcoe shall shew you the way to the sea-shore, where the waves will afford you room for meditation, with your mind, by no means unproductive. Till then, adieu.”

At this, delivering me over to the attentions of Simcoe, whom he summoned by a bell which generally stood on the table, I left him, under the charge of that civil domestic, hoping on my return to find his reflections had turned to profit.

CHAPTER XXIII.

GREAT THINGS FROM SMALL CAUSES.—THE EFFECTS OF VULGAR IMPERTINENCE ON A HIGH MIND.—THE MARQUESS YIELDS TO PERSUASION, OF WHICH I REAP THE BENEFIT.—I RETURN TO LONDON, WHERE, WITH MORE AND MORE PROSPECT OF ADVANCEMENT, I AM ONLY MORE DESPONDING ON THE SUBJECT OF BERTHA.

What your wisdom could not discover, these shallow fools have brought to light.

SHAKSPEARE.—*Much Ado about Nothing*.

Thou art in a parlous state, shepherd.

As You Like It.

AFTER we had passed the sort of esplanade that lies before Belford Tower, I began to explore, under the guidance of the faithful Simcoe, a winding path, changing often into steps cut in the rock, leading to the sea.

During the descent, it was evident that my guide paused at particular turnings, in the hope of gaining information respecting the recent interview between his lord and the worthies who had just made their exit. “I never knew my lord so loud in all his life,” said Mr. Simcoe.

Finding this produced no comment, at another resting place, he said he feared that something very queer had happened; for Mr. Juniper had pressed his hand, much affected, and said, “‘ I am afraid, Mr. Simcoe, I shall never drink a glass of your warm punch in your warm room again.’ Something extraordinary must have happened,” continued the butler, “ for this to be; but provided it takes my lord to town, or even only to Beaulieu, I shall not care. May I be so bold, Sir, as to ask what happened? for lawyer Parrot seemed on excessive high ropes, and swore that my lord would repent the affront he had put upon him the longest day he had to live. If not too free, Sir, may I take the liberty of asking what was the affront? for though I have known my lord, once or twice in the course of his life, knock a man down when in a passion, I never knew him affront any person whatever.”

“ His lordship,” said I, “ certainly did not give this proof to Mr. Parrot of abstaining from affronting him; but he dismissed him from his service, not more gently than he deserved.”

“ I dare say,” returned the butler; “ for though Mr. Parrot carries himself civil enough towards us, I have known him very peart in speaking of and to his superiors, which I tell him is always wrong, especially as he lives by them. In this case, too, if he has talked to my lord’s face what he has sometimes said of him behind his back, he deserves hanging; for my lord, though not so rich as he was, is still as generous as a prince. More’s the pity; as, far from thanking him, such people as Parrot, while they pocket his money, say it is all to shew off as it were, and make the world think he is not ruined, when he is; God forbid! I suppose, however, from what has passed, we shall never see Mr. Parrot again.”

“ I suppose so,” replied I; and having by this time reached the strand, on which a fine rough flood tide was foaming in billows, I allowed Mr. Simcoe to climb home again, meditating on his way the important news I had communicated to him, while the sea roared me into a sort of solemnity of thought.

For my own part, though there was nothing but what was perfectly respectful to his master in what Simcoe had said, I did not approve his allowing himself to talk of him as he did to me, a comparative stranger; and, from the conduct of the vulgar Parrot, which made me recollect the maxim of that accomplished woman, Lady Hungerford, that all vulgarity had something selfish in it, I made a resolution for my future guidance, never to put myself in the power of an inferior, whether in station or mind, or trust him with any thing I wished not to have published to the world.

These thoughts and some others, which seldom left me, occupied my solitary walk on the solitary strand that led to Belford. The others may be guessed; for I had counted upon receiving that

morning, in a letter from Granville (which never came), an answer to mine from York, requesting information on the mysterious visit by Prince Adolphus to Foljambe Park.

All thought, however, was at length lost in the contemplation of the magnificent billows, white with foam, and thundering as they approached nearer and nearer, devouring, as it were, the strand on which I stood, and covering me at times with their spray. They seemed the stupendous majesty of nature (for it had begun almost to blow a storm), and engaged me till the sound of the great bell of the castle, floating upon the wind, told me the hour of dinner was near. This, in conformity with Lord Rochfort's new habits, was three o'clock; and I made haste to rejoin him, not a little anxious to know the result of his self-examination. As the dinner was, however, going on the table, this could not be till that repast was concluded; which, being little like the London banquets where I had formerly met him, did not take long.

Though we sat in full view of Apemantus's Grace, our dinner was by no means confined to roots, as Apemantus recommended. The fisheries on the coast supplied the freshest herrings; Berwick sent exquisite kipper¹; and the moors, which looked so bleak and dreary, besides well-flavoured mutton, gave us excellent and savoury wild fowl. The cellars also in Grosvenor Square had not been permitted to retain the whole of their treasures.

When I complimented my noble host upon all this, he said, "Though I fled from man, I did not think myself bound to fly from what was meant for the use of man. This is a part of the philosophy of retirement which I neither did, nor wished to understand; and though I admired and approved Apemantus's Grace, it was always with the exception of the intimation, 'I eat root.' Indeed, so little was I a convert to that part of it, that, to the shame of all hermits be it spoken, I endeavoured to seduce my French cook, Monsieur Dumain, to stay with me here; but after surveying the place, and bestowing many *sacristies* upon it, he demanded his *congé*, though I offered to raise his wages. I was glad of it; for my seclusion, and dinners like this, soon taught me that a French cook, that requisite of fashion, was, like fashion itself, only another humbug among the many that deceive the world."

"But, now," said his lordship, after a slight pause—"now for your mission. I have taken my resolution upon it, though a little ashamed of the main reason that has led to it. In a word, I do not like to think that an alarm to my pride, and a disgust at impertinence, have effected more in removing, if not my prejudices themselves, at least their consequences, than sober reason. This morn-

¹ Dried salmon.

ing I had resolved only to send my proxy to Lord Castleton, and to remain here myself. I now see that to remain here, with the jack-anapes I have dismissed for a companion (to say nothing of the danger of confiding in him as a law adviser), is impossible; and as there is no alternative, I am ready to return to town. To do so, shorn of my beams as I must be, has, I own, been my stumbling-block; but the real philosophy which my solitude, by making me better acquainted with myself, has generated, has overcome that. I think with you, that a peer, not yet in the decline of his age, has no right to renounce his duty by retiring, especially if he retire in a pet, which perhaps I did. The worst is, that, in all probability, it is a pet that sends me back again: but thus are we governed; such is human nature: it was a pet, you know, that enabled Troy to hold out so many years; it was a pet that produced the *Iliad*."

"Pet, or sober reflection," replied I, overjoyed, "I hail the decision as the best thing that could happen for the country; and I am sure Lord Castleton will, as far as he is concerned, give you *carte blanche*."

"Hold," said he; "not a word of that. It will spoil all the grace of the thing, if there can be any thing of grace in only doing what we think is right. I approve of Lord Castleton's measures, and I will support them because I approve; but I will not be paid for it. I am not paid by the nation for doing its business in the House of Lords; I will not be paid by Lord Castleton for there doing the business of the nation. There is a still stronger reason. It cannot be concealed that my fortune is hurt. If it was not by others, it would be revealed by the officious blockhead I have dismissed. It shall never be said that I took office to retrieve my affairs. Tell this to Castleton, who, I know, will understand my conduct, though no one else may."

I was really so overcome with this noble frankness, this generosity of spirit, that it was some time before I could reply.

It is unnecessary to relate the consequent steps taken before I left the castle. I will only add upon the subject, that the marquess acted up to his professions; realizing all expectations; and, from his persevering disinterestedness, depriving even party calumny of a pretext to impute a sordid motive to him. Sourkrout attempted it by putting the world upon their guard, exclaiming weekly, "We shall see"—"the mare's nest will be found out"—"old birds not to be caught with chaff"—"all is not gold that glitters;"—and other like elegant phrases, all denoting the chaste and delicate style of this champion of liberty and regulator of the public taste.

But, unhappily, he was disappointed, for the marquess continued a powerful support of the government without office; which so enraged the patriotic and virtuous editor, that he hinted pretty broadly,

that he had good reason to believe the marquess enjoyed in secret a very considerable pension, either out of the secret service or the privy purse.

It may be supposed that I wrote a precise detail of all my operations at Belford Tower to Lord Castleton ; and the whole scene of that romantic place, the varied interests it presented in viewing the turns of Lord Rochfort's vehement but noble character, together with its crowning event, made my visit to it the most pleasing as well as exciting occurrence of my public life.

To return to my narrative : I was gratified before I left Northumberland, by the most unqualified approbation of all my proceedings, accompanied with a prospect held out to me which would have left little in the way of fortune to desire. For as yet I had been only private secretary to my patron ; but the death of Mr. Mansfield, the chief secretary, having made a vacancy not only in that office, but a considerable sinecure in the colonies, Lord Castleton told me at once, that I might depend upon the nomination to both.

As this, however, was evidently the effect of having overvalued my service in respect to Lord Rochfort, with more scrupulous feelings than many old stagers would have thought prudent, I sat down to explain to Lord Castleton, that I owed my success more to accident than ability. I therefore related to him the whole history of the effect of Parrot's insolence upon that nobleman, as greatly aiding, if not solely procuring, the result which ensued.

Lord Castleton, with all the liberality that marked him, wrote me for answer that my self-denial only enhanced, not only my service, but his wish to reward it ; he had therefore ordered the patents to be made out against my return.

Behold me then, henceforward, not only with more power, but with an immense increase of income, half of it for life.

The first of the joyful impressions which this made upon me was, that it brought me somewhat, though but a little, nearer that fascinating dream, which still haunted me, spite of fate. But this was like a momentary gleam of sunshine in winter ; for besides that any good fortune of mine could only bring our *situations*, not our *hearts*, nearer together (being wholly ignorant of her feelings towards me, even if she were free), I had been told, on authority, that if I had acquired the whole estate of Bardolfe Castle, peerage and all, never could I pretend to her whom I now thought the *betrothed* Bertha.

This was only confirmed by the continued silence of Granville, in regard to my letter from York.

The tidings of my prosperity, however, I communicated to my benefactors, Fothergill and Manners, and the good family at Bardolfe, to whom it occasioned wonder as well as pleasure, for none

of them could fancy, much less believe, that "t'young doctor," when he set out on a journey on foot, could have been destined to such good fortune as a place for life, and a seat in Parliament. One unlooked-for satisfaction was added to it, that it made my good, quiet, and retiring father hold his head up higher than was his wont at the grand jury at York; but this *par parenthèse*.

On arriving in town, I wanted much to make me completely happy. I found myself involved in the novel business of an election; for Lord Castleton had gladly fallen in with Lord Rochfort's proposal, that I should stand on his interest for the borough of Winterton; and so close had the time run, that I had scarcely an hour to give a farther account of my mission to my chief. However, the feared opposition not taking place, eight and forty hours sufficed to class me among the Commons of England; for in those days the interference of a peer in an election was not very scrupulously inquired into. And yet, as I never gave a vote which I would not have given had I been elected by a hundred thousand voices, and supported the measures I did, because I approved them, I have seen nothing in the virtuous, uncorrupt, and incorruptible times since (in which the *purest* reform has prevented the return of any but the *purest* patriots), to make me feel that I did not love my country and act for its interests as honestly as they.

The benefit, however, which the state has received by this most virtuous change, from the universal corruption, folly and turbulence of former times, to the universal wisdom, honesty, and unanimity of the present, is too clear to stop the current of these memoirs in order to prove it. But this also *par parenthèse*.

I had now attained to the summit of the ambition of many a man beyond me in age—office, revenue, and the honours of Parliament; yet the events passing at Foljambe Park still occupied my principal interests. Granville had never noticed my urgent letter; my first inquiry, therefore, was after him; my next, Lady Hungerford. In regard to the first, I was more than ever anxious to see him from his neglect (unkind, as I thought it) of my urgent request for information respecting the report of Bertha's marriage. It was now ten days since I wrote to him so urgently on the subject, from the coffee-room at York.

To my concern, though not my wonder, I found that both Granville and Lady Hungerford were gone to Foljambe Park; he, almost immediately after I left town, and Lady Hungerford, only the day before I returned.

My heart sank as Lord Castleton told me this. Alas! thought I, they have gone to attend the nuptials of the young princess; he as counsellor to the family and near kinsman, she as the dearest friend of the bride.

Resolved to heroism, as I thought myself, I own the news shocked me. I grew pale and sick, and I thought Lord Castleton eyed me with peculiar curiosity; but I should have been equally affected had a porter in the streets regarded me with earnestness, on the principle of a guilty conscience.

My anxiety threw me off my guard, and I fear Lord Castleton discovered me. For I could not help saying, though my voice faltered, "I suppose they have gone to attend the wedding."

"What wedding?" asked Lord Castleton; "I heard of none. They mentioned none to me."

"Not of Miss Hastings," said I, "with Prince Adolphus of Saxony, her cousin? I suppose, as a minister, you saw him in town some days ago?"

"No; he passed through, without being presented."

"Aye, on the wings of love," observed I. "No wonder;" and I faltered more and more.

"You speak like what you are," said Lord Castleton, good-humouredly, "a warm young man. Prince Adolphus, I am informed, is Mr. Hastings' nephew, but I have heard of no nuptials."

"And yet the account must be true."

"What account?"

"That in the *World* newspaper, that he was engaged to his cousin, and had therefore proceeded to Yorkshire without stopping."

"'Tis strange, if this be so," said Lord Castleton, "and Granville or Lady Hungerford knew it, that neither of them should have mentioned it."

"It might be a secret," returned I, "and they the confidants of it."

"You have at least settled it in your own mind," returned the earl, "and the prince must be lucky, for he is as poor as Job, and the lady, Honora tells me, is rich, and not only eminently beautiful, but still more lovely in character."

"Lady Hungerford," answered I, "is seldom deceived in her judgment of her friends."

"The more happy for you," replied my patron, smiling.

Here the conversation ended, and, after a few business topics, I was allowed to seek repose, if I could, in the solitude of my lodgings. When there, I turned the matter a thousand ways in my mind. That the marriage was about to take place, every thing conspired to prove. Public report uncontradicted—the visit of the two the most likely to attend it, not only from connection and friendship, but as having been long the trusted depositaries of the secret;—for of this I had no doubt. Why, however, it should have been a secret at all, or lord Castleton not apprized of it when it was to be one no longer, weighed a little, though but a little, on the other side.

No ; I had no consolation ; though if I had had it as to the instant marriage, what it would ultimately have availed me was a question I did not fail to ask myself. Still I wished it determined ; and would rather have been even present at the ceremony, than be torn to pieces as I was by the anxieties of suspense. The next morning, therefore, and two or three after that, I ransacked every newspaper for the expected intelligence, and even made a daily journey to a city coffee-house, where I had been told the York county papers were taken, to satisfy my curiosity.

Lord Castleton wondered at my unusual eagerness about his post, and my impatience till all his packets were opened ; particularly when he discovered, as he soon did, that this great interest was all occasioned by an expectation of his hearing from Lady Hungerford. My own disappointment as to Granville, to my annoyance, remained, nor did I like to intrude upon him again ; in short, my uneasiness grew unbearable, as is always the case with protracted suspense.

At last the well-watched knock of the postman produced a letter in Granville's hand, and the Ferry-bridge post-mark. Its contents were remarkable.

" I did not answer you immediately," said he, " for I myself, though here, was too little informed to resolve your question ; nor would I write now, but that I know you to be so sensitive a gentleman, that I shall have a quarrel *à outrance* on my hands if I do not say something. What to say is the question, for what can I say when I know nothing correctly ? Surmises I could give in plenty, but could not answer for their truth. I may tell you, however, that there are no preparations for a wedding, nor do I know if any are in contemplation. Meantime, what is certain is, the severe illness of Mr. Hastings, who is confined to his bed, which is anxiously attended both by the prince and Bertha. You did not judge ill of the handsome Adolphus when you pronounced him so fine a fellow. (This gave me a severe pang.)

" As to engagements, I have certainly heard of them (and I will no longer conceal from you, on sufficient authority) ; but how they got into the papers, except by dealing with the devil (which I believe all editors do), I don't know. Yet there is no outward indication of one *at present* ; though there is certainly great intimacy between the cousins, for Bertha does not refuse herself to his attentions ; and, on his part, his respect for her seems always so profound in her presence, as to prevent his shewing his agreeable qualities ; for, out of it, he is really excellent company.

" This is all I know. If any one knows more, it is Lady Hungerford, to whom, before she arrived here, there had been frequent letters from the supposed princess elect."

“Let me not conclude without felicitating you on the accession you have made both to your reputation, station, and fortune. A seat in Parliament and two thousand a-year, half of it by patent for life, make you a *bon parti* for any damsel, however high. Never forget, therefore, what I long ago told you, that there is more than one Bertha in the world.”

“When I do,” said I, as I finished reading, “may my right hand forget her cunning.” And will it be believed, that what Granville thus threw out respecting a *bon parti* actually made me direct my thoughts towards this forbidden land, with a sort of elevation, spite of all caution to the contrary, and spite even of the present situation of affairs. Oh, youth! youth! delightful with hope, and irrepressible by fear!—what is not thy value?

Notwithstanding all this, I was obliged to come to a sober examination of the case. Whatever might be the situation as to engagement, previous to the handsome foreigner’s arrival, it was clear that they must have now come to mutual understanding, for Bertha “*did not refuse herself to his attentions*,” and in her presence his respect for her was so profound as to check his natural spirits. What greater proof could I have?

I would have given my new appointment to have been allowed to consult Lady Hungerford, whose gloomy assurance (never forgotten), that if I was even Lord Bardolfe, or Lord Clifford himself, I could not succeed, was now remembered in greater force than ever. I was too vain, perhaps, in thinking that I had some place in Bertha’s regard, and would not believe that the impossibility denounced was personal. It therefore could only be occasioned by this engagement; the existence of which was now actually not denied by Granville, though he hung a cloud over, at the same time that he revealed it. How much better, therefore, for me if she were actually married; for, while she was single, it seemed too clearly proved that I was incurable. Granville’s allusion to a *bon parti* did not make the contrary more likely.

On the other hand, the announcement of Mr. Hastings’ illness was cause of much speculation. If he died (and how tottering had been his health), what more reasonable, more wise, or more likely, than that his daughter should seek protection from one of her nearest relatives, who could give her the highest rank and dignity, while she, a great heiress, enriched him with the wealth he wanted to support them?

Oh! thought I, that Fothergill or Manners were here to guide me, for how little am I able to guide myself!

CHAPTER XXIV.

OF THE CHANGE IN LORD ROCHFORD ON HIS RETURN TO THE WORLD.

The Gods are witness,
Ne'er did poor steward wear a truer grief
For his undone lord, than mine eyes for you.

SHAKSPEARE.—*Timon of Athens.*

Happy is your grace,
That can translate the stubbornness of fortune
Into so quiet and so sweet a stile.

As You Like It.

I RESUME my account of the Marquess of Rochfort. I trust the reader is as interested as I was myself to observe what would be his conduct on returning to the world. He was no common-place character, and wherever he was would exhibit a life of his own.

His return was hailed by his political friends, of course, but also by all others, many of whom thought the comparison which had been made of him to Timon would still hold—that he had discovered gold in the recesses of his northern castle, and that they might expect a renewal of that prodigality by which they had so often benefited.

They were disappointed. He gave the closest attention to business in the House of Peers, where he often spoke with effect, to the great advantage of his friends in the ministry; but he no longer kept open house, or laid himself out for popular applause. To imitate Chatham, and force the closet by riding into it on the shoulders of the people, was given up as chimerical; yet to gain it by the ordinary methods of obsequious homage was disdained as much as ever; and, feeling indignant at what he thought the ill-usage of former friends and followers, he fell back upon himself, shining in public business, but maintaining a dignified reserve in his private demeanour which nothing broke in upon. His acquaintance, therefore, far from that indiscriminate concourse which had administered formerly to his pride, and to expectations which had been frustrated by what he thought and called treachery, were now contracted to a few—the very few whom, though men of the world, he considered honest.

At the head of these was Lord Castleton, who with Granville, and sometimes myself, seemed the companions he preferred. I

know not whether he was happy, but he was certainly less ascetic, and he was at least true to the disinterested resolution he had taken of declining office, lest his motives for returning should be suspected ;—for his rival, the duke, having retired from the cabinet, and his place being offered him, he declined it, though his fortune was at nurse and his means much required it.

The cool, discriminating judgment of his friend Lord Castleton remonstrated against this, as an unnecessary and undeserved sacrifice of himself to public prejudice, which he ought to be above ; and Lord Castleton was right. Yet if health and evident ease of mind, apparent in his looks, his manners, and his conversation, all indicating peace with himself, were the result of this determination, I cannot think that Lord Rochfort was wrong.

The observing Mr. Simcoe was so struck with the alteration, that for some time after their return from their rough abode in the north he always accosted me when I visited the marquess, with a “ Lord, Sir, what a blessing it was when you found us out at that queer old tower. My lord seems his own man again. Indeed (though he does not give so many dinners, and I have much less to do here than at Belford), he’s a better man than ever he was.”

For my own part, I rejoiced almost as much as Mr. Simcoe himself, for I could not help loving the marquess for his affability to *me*, perhaps the more for his sternness to everybody else. At first, therefore, I was grieved to see him shut up in a house, once the favourite abode of gaiety and magnificence, now converted into a solitude, and himself the hermit of it.

The motive, however (summed up in his love of independence), for withdrawing himself from his former companions (I mean not his followers, whom he now detested for their ingratitude, but), his equals, gilded his retreat, and his manner of carrying it into effect displayed all the vehement character that belonged to him.

I learnt much of this from his solicitor, Mr. Fountain, with whom I was thrown into a sort of intimacy by the election at Winterton, at which place, as indeed everywhere else, save and except the northern regions, which were so happily administered by the illustrious Parrot, he was an active, skilful agent, or rather I may say a confidential friend. This gentleman, the opposite to Parrot in every thing, whether as to professional knowledge, or the extraordinary common sense, cool judgment, and even temper which distinguished him, wound up all his character with, or rather founded it upon, a warmth and simplicity of heart, and a disinterestedness as to self, which made him the wonder as well as the honour of his profession. So much so, that he alone would balance *all* the adverse opinions which the examples of too many unworthy members of that profession have created in regard to them as a whole ; and

I may safely say, after coursing through almost every division of society, that, if he was not *more* just than all others, he was

“ E'en *as* just a man
As e'er my conversation cop'd withall.”

Happy indeed was Lord Rochfort, (as happy indeed is every one) who, in an adviser always at his side, possesses one who unites the clearest professional skill, with the most disinterested attachment of a friend. Such was Mr. Fountain who had done all he could to keep the marquess in the right path, and was as grieved as Flaminus himself^{*}, when he saw his reckless advance to ruin. For he was perfectly alive to his high qualities, and esteemed and loved the better parts of his character, particularly, he said, his contempt for the rascals who had profited by his eccentricities to undo him.

Hence there was always open war between Fountain and the usurers, whose scandalous arts, roguery, and impudence combined, he always did his utmost to expose and defeat; and though he could not induce Lord Rochfort to do himself common justice by them, and his refusal to do so cost him thousands, yet he could not help admiring the motives which prompted the sacrifice.

“ For though they had undone him,” said Mr. Fountain to me, “ I observed that to think of their power over him gave him far more disgust and self-reproach than the loss of all the money out of which they had cheated him. I was with the marquess one day,” he added, “ when Scrape, the scrivener, ‘an exceeding knave,’ who had often raised money for him, brought in his account, amounting to 20,000*l*. Would you believe that of this sum, what reached the marquess’s pocket was 5,000*l*.? Shocked at this, he remonstrated. The fellow, who had been always meanly reverential till he got him into his net, grew saucy, and, far from relaxing, defied him. For he had bound him by special securities, and coolly now told him if he chose law, he might go into court if he pleased. Lord Rochfort felt the disgrace of this in his very soul; and though I interposed,” said Fountain, “ and told him that Chancery would relieve him from an imposition of 400 per cent., ‘No,’ said he, ‘the scoundrel knows his advantage; he knows that his name stinks so, that I shrink from mine being associated with it, even to save 10,000*l*. No; I dare not go to law with him, though I should succeed: let the beast be paid; but do you hear, Sir, get you out of the room as fast as you can, lest you be kicked down stairs.’ Lord Rochfort,” proceeded Fountain, “broke up the remaining part of his establishment in consequence, and continues the recluse he is, till the money is retrieved.”

^{*} Steward of Timon.

I found that the marquess had now done so some months, and would be obliged to do so many more. Yet he was more cheerful, Lord Castleton told me, than he had ever known him in his most palmy days, when thousands, by courting his nod, accelerated his comparative ruin. To be sure, it obliged him to live the life of a recluse in the very heart of the world ; at which I took the liberty of wondering ; but he defended it, and declared to me, in confidential conversations, that he never was happier ; for he never felt himself in such possession of his mind, or of so fair and just a judgment of mankind. “ Crowds,” said he, “ no longer knock at my door ; but those who do, I can depend upon ; and one good attends me, worth all, and more than all, I have relinquished—I see the world as it is ; I am no longer its dupe ; no longer in a false position.”

Upon this subject he was sometimes fond of expatiating, and would then honour me with his confidence. “ I have run the round of life,” said he to me one day ; “ I have travelled abroad and at home, and revelled, I fear, in pleasure, little restrained by prudence. I have been the gayest of the gay : I have been ambitious, and, with the country, though not the court, successful. In earlier times I loved to distraction, and my love was returned. I have been rich as well as poor—lived with nobles and wits—the highest statesmen—the most successful of generals—the most praised of authors—all the best names of Britain. I have listened with delight to eloquence in the senate, myself a number, and not an obscure one. I have been even an author, and not damned. In short, I believe I have travelled the whole circle of human pursuits, with passions equal to the most passionate. I have, in fact, fed upon excitement, and the hey-day at sixty seems yet not totally over. And yet I can safely say that no hour of my life has been so intensely sweet as when, though under this cloud of fortune, shutting out the world, I have feasted alone, in this cabinet, upon meditations prompted either by my own thoughts or the thoughts of others, in the books you see around me.

“ Thought, alone, is happiness, when not melancholy. Its free current, whatever its subject, is to the mind what exercise is to the body ; but when prompted by a feeling of content and unruffled nerves, it becomes the health of the soul, and generates a grateful piety to heaven, such as I am ashamed to say the greatest seeming prosperity never produced. Can I then want society, even if I had not the few friends I value about me ? No ; for I now converse better with the mighty dead, than when tormented with the mighty living. What wonder, then, if I love being alone, especially as the place where I am so, prevents it from ever growing wearisome ; as the moment I am saturated with it, the remedy is at hand, and the

world at my door? In fact, I find the alternation of business and leisure to be the secret of happiness; useful business, and well-employed leisure, or, as Rousseau calls it, 'judicious inaction.' My inaction, I trust, is at least not injudicious; for what more interesting, particularly to an old man who has been tossed about in the world, than to bring his experience into play for the discovery of truth? This, I can safely say, whether in the streets, or my study, is now my employment, and that

'Quid verum atque decens, curo et rogo, et omnis in hoc sum.'"

I congratulated him upon this, and said he was, I thought, more enviable than ever he had been; yet could not help expressing wonder that, being single, he continued in such loneliness as so vast a house must now appear to him. I ventured to ask even if he would not be more cheerful in a smaller mansion?

His answer was characteristic, though not very consistent with his new-found philosophy.

"I see your meaning," said he, at first knitting his brow; but, soon recovering, he went on. "You think I have no longer a right to a palace, not being able to fill it as usual. But why not, if it please me, and such be my humour? You will say, I ought to profit by what I cannot enjoy, and let it for a palace's rent; which, indeed, I could do. But never shall the finger of men I contemn point at me as the profligate who has been forced to quit his family mansion. To be sure, it is no longer brilliant with sunshine in the day, or lamps at night, for most of the rooms are shut up; but I can now do what I could not do before—illumine whatever place I am in with my own thoughts; thoughts for which I am all the better, instead of those others which formerly did any thing but enlighten me. I exemplify, therefore, what is so sublimely said by Milton,

*'He that has light within his own clear breast,
May sit i' the centre and enjoy bright day;
But he that hides a dark soul, and foul thoughts,
Benighted walks under the mid-day sun:
Himself is his own dungeon.'*"

Eccentric, and perhaps inconsistent, as this conduct was, it was impossible not to respect Lord Rochfort for pursuing it.

But, turn we to other matters.

CHAPTER XXV.

A CHANGE IN THE PROPERTY OF MR. HASTINGS.—I HAVE AN INTERESTING CONVERSATION WITH LADY HUNGERFORD.—THE MYSTERY REGARDING BERTHA AND HER COUSIN NOT CLEARED.

You have seen and proved a fairer form of fortune
Than that which is to approach.

SHAKSPEARE.—*Antony and Cleopatra*.

Doubting things go ill, often hurts more
Than to be sure they do.—*Cymbeline*.

ABOUT this time an event fell out which greatly affected the fortune of Mr. Hastings. I mentioned, I believe, that much of his income, or at least of its redundancy, consisted in West India property. An old country gentleman in Yorkshire cannot well look after plantations across the Atlantic; and, accordingly, Mr. Hastings, like many other great proprietors, depended upon a great agent to manage the concern. This agent just now failed to an immense amount. It ruined many, and, as I have said, greatly affected Mr. Hastings.

But it would have been fortunate if this had been all; for, one cause of the failure was, that at this time the island of Barbadoes, where all his fine property was situated, was desolated by one of those hurricanes which have so often ruined the greatest West India estates. Most of the plantations were destroyed outright: few houses escaped utter destruction, and none without damage. Many persons perished under the ruins, and more were driven into the sea. Above five thousand people lost their lives during this frightful catastrophe; and the property annihilated was said to amount to a million.

So great and general a blow could not pass without involving every family connected with the island, and of course Mr. Hastings, whose losses, between the hurricane and his agent's failure, were computed at above 100,000*l*.

Thus are we sometimes visited by a mysterious and inscrutable Providence, to whose decrees, all we have to do is to submit with resignation. This Mr. Hastings did, with the same piety which made him so submissive to Heaven's will, when visited by the loss of his son.

When this was first communicated to me—which it was by Lord Castleton—(for so great a destruction, being almost national, had

been the subject of special despatches to the government), my blood ran cold, my flesh crept, and I thought of the injury to this high family, but particularly of Bertha's altered prospects, with an affliction beyond any I could have felt had it been my own.

And yet how nobly did she bear it! Her chief and almost only care, as Granville told me in a long letter, which, at my most urgent entreaty, he wrote to relieve my anxiety, was how to soften it to her father, whose rapidly declining health might make such tidings critical, and prevent all hope of recovery.

As, however, the matter could not be kept from him, it was broke to him by degrees. Indeed, the whole extent of the injury was not at first known, and Bertha herself was not acquainted with it. When it was, and post after post brought the account of fresh losses, it was then that all the charm of her character, both for firmness and softness, displayed itself with a lustre which few could imitate.

In this she was greatly supported by the presence of her beloved friend and adviser, Lady Hungerford, who luckily was on the spot to console her. Granville, too, gave himself up to his uncle, and was of essential service to him by his advice, and assistance in business; and the prince cousin, I was told, shewed himself in the most amiable light, by the warm and delicate attentions which he paid to both his relations, under this their distress.

My heart envied the prince for this more than for all his other advantages. Happy man! thought I, who can now shew his real worth, by proving the disinterestedness of his duty and love, and confirm all the influence which his accomplishments have enabled him to acquire.

Partly by these attentions from his friends, partly from his own frame of mind, in which there was not only an innate piety, as has been formerly noticed, but a secret vigour, which uniform prosperity had rather suspended than suppressed, Mr. Hastings was enabled to bear his reverses with dignified composure; and Bertha, except for his sake, apparently bore them with entire indifference.

"We have yet this dear place left," said she, "from which it was always unpleasant to us to stir; we have still its gardens and flowers, and the village, and the poor blessing us. Why, then, ought we to quarrel with fortune for confining us to the spot on earth where we most wish to remain? If the sun would but come out, and you, my dear father, get strong enough to let me drive you abroad as usual, to enjoy it, why should storms thousands of miles off affect us?"

Mr. Hastings, upon these occasions, would kiss Bertha, and her eyes would sparkle at it, and shed new light upon all around (for a while upon her father himself), and that would make her still more

pleased. Nor would she allow her pleasure to be checked when he would observe, as he seemed sometimes forced to do, that Foljambe alone would not support the pleasures of Foljambe.

“And yet,” she would reply, looking at the books and her musical instruments, “these are not expensive enjoyments; and these still less,” throwing up the window, and inhaling the scent of the flowers. “But there is the sun himself coming out to reproach us for thinking we can want any thing when we have him.”

“All this,” said Granville, in writing this account, “would affect us, and nobody more than the prince, who would hold up his hands in ecstasy, and exclaim, ‘*Dieu! quel tempérament angélique!*’ And then he would look intently at her, and kiss her hand.”

But the exertion of Bertha generally ended in a fit of lowness afterwards, when alone with Lady Hungerford, in which, however, she thought only of her father, not of herself. “If he is but spared to us,” she would say, “how little shall we feel the want of what is lost!”

“I am very well aware,” said Granville, in concluding this account, “of the imprudence I commit towards you, for it will certainly not contribute to your cure, *which, however, is as necessary as ever*. But not only it is not easy to withstand your entreaties, but in informing you of the state of things here under this terrible worldly calamity, I think it almost a duty (I certainly have pleasure in it) to do this justice to my admirable cousin, who, if she had not done so before, would win the hearts of everybody around her.”

“As she has mine,” said I, throwing the letter from me in an agony of feeling, which yet I could not define, so compounded was it at once of the most tender admiration, jealousy, and despair.

That the happy Adolphus should admire the sweet excellence he courted, and which it was plain now was to crown his wishes, could neither surprise nor distress me; but that he should kiss her hand, *unopposed*, as it should seem (for I carefully examined as to that point), inflicted pangs upon me which I cannot even now forget.

Such was my reasonableness, and again, though alone, I burst out once more with a passage of Rousseau, which I had become fond of:—

“Femmes! Femmes! Objets chers et funestes! que la nature orna pour notre supplice, qui punissez quand on vous brave, et qu’on ne peut ni rechercher ni fuir impunément!”

It was in vain, under these impressions, that I sought to lose them, by plunging more than ever into business; for a material part of that business arose out of this very disaster at Barbadoes, and the Hastings plantations and Hastings losses so frequently oc-

curred, that I could not, if I would, attempt oblivion of the name. In the midst of this struggle, too, the arrival of Lady Hungerford in town prevented all further endeavour, and I returned to the subject with almost greater interest than ever.

My great point was to set the question of the engagement at rest, free from the mystery which Granville had thrown about it; and this I was resolved to try through Lady Hungerford, who seemed alone to have the power to decide it.

That accomplished woman and excellent friend had come back to Berkeley Square for a few days only, to prepare for a longer sojourn with the child of her love, to support and comfort whom she for a time gave up the world she was so formed to adorn.

Hearing of Lady Hungerford's arrival, I went to do her homage, as well as to satisfy, if I could, the interested curiosity I have confessed. I was admitted, and found myself once more alone with her. She gave me warm congratulations on my advancement, and prophesied still greater things; but I was deaf to all but what I hoped for—intelligence of Mr. Hastings, Bertha, and her princely cousin. All that I could get from her respecting the latter was—

“I see the papers have been, as usual, busy with what they know nothing about, and you of course, with the rest of the world, have been busy with the papers. Prince Adolphus came over to visit his relations. That is all the world knows, whatever it says.”

“And the story of his engagement, then, is a fabrication?” observed I.

I thought Lady Hungerford faltered in her reply.

“There are at least no signs of a wedding,” said she, “and at any rate, you and I have no business with it.”

This was so peremptory, that I did not dare go on, so was silent. She then spoke of Mr. Hastings' illness.

“He is, I fear, dying,” said she, “and my poor Bertha's heart is broken with the prospect. Not that her firmness abandons her; on the contrary, she thinks herself born only to support her parent in this his hour of trial. He never sees a tear, nor indeed any thing that might not inspire hope. But all who love her cannot but feel for her unprotected situation, if the event happens. The fortune she will have, notwithstanding the late losses, will only expose her more to danger, unless she marries her cousin.”

This was the first voluntary allusion Lady Hungerford had made to such an event, since our memorable conversation, when she so pointedly told me to lay aside all my ambitious, all my romantic thoughts about Bertha; and though her situation naturally, as it were, elicited this mention of her by Lady Hungerford, the latter seemed instantly to recollect herself, and would have changed the subject, had I not said, in answer to her last remark,

“I had really hoped, for her sake, that the report of the world was true, and that by this time Prince Adolphus would have been the protector you wish for her, under a higher title than that of cousin.”

Lady Hungerford seemed impressed with this. A slight flush passed over her cheek.

“This from you?” she said. “Did you really *hope* this? and can we really suppose you sincere in such a hope?”

“Whatever my feelings, Madam,” I replied, “where Miss Hastings’ happiness or interest is concerned, you may believe me sincere in any thing and every thing I express.”

“And you could really have been glad and easy, if the reports of this engagement had been well-founded?”

“Glad, I believe I could have been—easy, perhaps not; and glad only if Miss Hastings’ happiness or welfare had been promoted by it; for to that, willingly, though possibly not joyfully, I could sacrifice my own.”

Lady Hungerford, with modest grace, touched my hand upon this, and said,

“Upon my word I could not wish Bertha a better friend, did destiny allow it.”

“Still, *destiny*!” I exclaimed. “Yet your ladyship says the report of the engagement is not founded.”

“I did not go so far,” answered she, “and I will not be entangled into difficulties by words growing out of an embarrassing situation. The very word *engagement*, if critically dissected, might present a thousand difficulties in examining it, and I am imprudent in the last degree to allow this conversation to proceed; so, positively, no more. Have you yet spoken in Parliament?”

I had tact enough to see that I ought now to desist from farther discussion, and longed to be alone, to perpend what had passed. After a few general topics, therefore, I took my leave, not without pleasure from thinking that Lady Hungerford had been, if not more propitious, at least less severe and decisive than formerly upon this too interesting question; upon which all farther communication with her was interdicted by her returning to the park the very next day.

When alone, I examined more coolly what had passed. I could not, in the first place, conceal from myself that though Lady Hungerford was almost as mysterious as ever regarding the prince, she was by no means so positive as to the expected marriage. Neither had she renewed that oracular style which bade me so positively to lay aside hope, and lie down and die. Yet, on the other hand, she had any thing but denied the engagement, by admitting that there

were difficulties, and an embarrassing situation. So there generally are in all engagements, or none need be made.

The match therefore was, at least, not off. The prince might have to settle affairs. He might have been called by duty to the army. Mr. Hastings' illness might have prevented an instant fulfilment, and the ceremony was thus only deferred. All this supported the supposition.

Yet the little necessity for secrecy if the fact existed. All parties their own masters; the match every way so suitable. Why any mystery, if indeed there was any? Why the wish for a protector, and that protector at hand, if nothing opposed? Above all, why the want of explicitness—aye or no—in one who must know; an explicitness which nothing forbade, and kindness recommended?

On the other hand, a prohibition to examine the subject. The phrase, "I will not be entangled in difficulties." Why fear to be so? All this defeated the supposition. And thus I was left in the usual sea of doubt.

At this moment a diversion of interests, which pleasingly occupied my thoughts, relieved me for a time, and it must be owned it was a relief I much needed.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE OLD CASTLE OF BARDOLFE CHANGES MASTERS.—MY DREAMS ABOUT IT.—I AM MORE AND MORE EMBARRASSED ABOUT PRINCE ADOLPHUS.

Thus far my fortune keeps an upward course.

SHAKSPEARE.—3 *Henry VI.*

THE post, for which I was now always keenly anxious, brought me a letter from Mr. Manners; not an unexpected event, as I had kept up a constant correspondence with him at his own desire, and informed him of every step of my progress, which much delighted him; for he said he felt for me as a father would for a son; "particularly," added he, "as it was I who first advised, and pointed out the path you were to take. This time, however, it is your turn to advise, in a matter in which I want to consult you; so come to me, if you can, on your first leisure day."

It may be supposed that I obeyed the summons, and soon found myself at the Grange.

To be there was always to be happy; for never had I forgotten

those delightful, as well as profitable, philosophic conversations with this wise and excellent person, which had done me so much good. It was with joy, therefore, that I shook hands with him once more, and wandered with him again in our old haunts in his garden and the forest.

He soon let me into the reason for sending for me, by producing a York paper which had been sent him, and which, at first to my surprise, advertised that the castle and estate of Bardolfe were to be sold, either by auction or private contract.

For Mr. Hastings' sake, I gave a deep sigh at this ; but, after a little consideration, I thought it might be a prudent step to take, there being no family ties on his part to this property, and lying, as it did, so wide from Foljambe. In fact, I afterwards found that Granville, on being consulted, had reasoned in the same manner ; and the fatal hurricane having occasioned the immediate necessity for a very considerable sum, he had advised the disposal of this property in preference to any other, for the very reasons which had suggested themselves to me.

"Well," said Mr. Manners, when I had done pondering the subject, "you recollect, I suppose, that the proceeds of this estate, when it went out of your family, came into mine ; or rather, only into another branch of yours : for you will also recollect that (though by *female* descent) we are Cliffords and Bardolfes as well as you."

"It is impossible to forget," cried I, "what was the main cause of the interest you are so good as to take in me, and of my consequent prosperity."

"We will not talk of that," replied he ; "but I mention it to account for a wish I have to become the purchaser of what I ought to consider a family estate ; for had not my grandmother's fortune been paid in money, perhaps the place itself would be actually mine."

"I am too happy to think so," answered I.

"Well, I have about the wherewithal in the funds to purchase it," observed he, "and can even make money by the exchange ; and having heard your pleasure in talking of the place, I want you to describe it more accurately, and perhaps more honestly, than the auctioneer here, who talks of it as if it were Kenilworth."

At this I laughed, and told him he must lower his expectations by many degrees, and that no doubt it was its being the first great interest of my childhood that made me so fond of it.

True to his tenets, "There cannot be a better reason," said he, "were it Warwick or Berkeley itself. As the castle, however, will be thrown in for nothing, and the rent-roll is about 600*l.* a-year, the price asked for it (18,000*l.*) cannot hurt me ; and if you can tell me that there are no real objections, I have made up my mind to be-

come the purchaser. What think you, indeed, of my changing my name to the old possessor's? There would then be once again Bardolfe of Bardolfe.

Though this last was *badinage*, I was greatly pleased with the whole scheme, when, after a little musing, he said,

“A thought strikes me, which you may approve or not, as you please. You have now, for a bachelor, a large income. Suppose you let half of it accumulate, which it soon would, till you muster up the purchase-money. I would then resell it at the same price, or order my executor to do it. Bardolfe Castle would then really belong to a rightful descendant of the name; and when you come to your peerage, which of course you will (*being so eminent a statesman*), there may be once more a Clifford of Bardolfe, or a Lord Bardolfe, if you please; only beware of another Bramham Moor.”

This playful humour made the serious plan as to the purchase still more pleasant; especially when he added, “As soon as the place is mine, I shall certainly, as in duty bound, pay my respects to my relations in the neighbourhood.”

“Were you other than what you are,” observed I, “I should object to this, on account of the homeliness of your reception; for the future *Lord Clifford*, or *Lord Bardolfe*, would not like to see his rustic relations undervalued by the still polished man of the world, though he has been so long estranged from it.”

“That they never would be by me,” replied he, “for having the sense to confine themselves to their lot, whatever it is: and you must have read me very ill, if you think I should respect them more if they shewed themselves ashamed of it.”

He was commencing a lecture upon this, when he returned to the subject of the purchase, which he said he would set about without delay.

“But meantime,” added he, “you shall give me a full and true description of it, which I will take with all due allowances for your fervid imagination in painting any thing or any person you like; and then perhaps I may get at a little truth.”

I highly approved his caution, particularly as it allowed me a latitude of which I did not fail to avail myself; though upon the whole, without *much* exaggeration, I gave him such a picture of it, that he said, as soon as he made it his own, he would set off to the north to survey it, and asked if it were possible that I could accompany him.

I told him I despaired of it, though nothing would please me more; yet I could not help wondering at his sudden energy, and readiness to leave the Grange, to which he had professed himself so wedded, that he believed nothing could tempt him from it, even for a day.

He looked a little conscious in his reply, when he said,

“Why, I own I am something like Doctor Sangrado, when he was detected by Gil Blas mixing a *little* (mind, it was but a *little*) wine with his water. Now, like Sangrado with his water, I do not love the Grange less, but perhaps would wish to see the world a little more before I die. But pray observe, it is not its follies, its caprice, or its struggles that I want to observe; but its improvements in its arts and manners, which I am told have been miraculous since I was in it. In fact, I think a short tour may do me good, by relieving the sameness of my hermit life, and will make me return to it with heightened enjoyment.”

“You allow, then,” said I, I am afraid rather wickedly, “that there is a sameness even in the Grange, which might be the better for a little relief?”

“I do,” replied he, “and that’s the truth on’t. Since you left me (and I own, those three or four days you spent with me, and a visit from Lord Castleton and Fothergill, have rather spoiled me), I have seen nobody but Deborah the cook, and Walker the butler; and besides, the Binfield clock is out of order; so you see I cannot stay here till it is repaired, and meantime, a journey to the north will give me a fillip. Thus I am at least not an unreasonable philosopher, the slave of his theory, but confess when the shoe pinches.”

So candid an avowal demanded a cessation from raillery, and I felicitated him upon his openness, which he took in good part; and he settled to return with me to London, to make his purchase.

His lawyer I found was Mr. Fountain, and, with that gentleman, there being no factitious difficulty, in order to enhance the costs, he soon after wrote to me from Barnard Castle, that he was lord of the beautiful ruins and fine estate of Bardolfe.

What was an additional pleasure, he had visited his new relations, as he called them; found my father a man of worth, my brothers honest fellows, and was half in love with my mother, for putting him, as he was pleased to say, much in mind of his own.

“You may suppose,” said he, “we talked much of t’ young doctor.” In fine, he was much pleased both with the estate and the castle; so much with the latter, that he was fitting up three or four rooms for a Christian to live in when he came to visit it, preferring it greatly, he said, to that dreary *Chartreuse, Bolton le Moors*.

Meantime, though in London, and plunged in business, it may be supposed I kept a watchful eye upon the spot where almost all my interests were centered, and I daily looked with tremor for the arrival of the post from Foljambe. The illness of Mr. Hastings—still protracted—kept my nerves on the stretch; for if he died, what would become of Bertha? With so much greater need of comfort and support, I more than ever concluded that she would naturally

seek the prince as her lawful protector, for of the engagement there could be no doubt.

Under these impressions, therefore, I was struck with wonder by a letter from Granville, which, after informing me in the body of it that Mr. Hastings was better, announced in a postscript, that in consequence of it, the prince was about to return to Germany.

This renewed all my speculations, particularly as Granville added, that both he and Bertha seemed particularly happy and pleased with one another. He then gave me news about himself, which, but for the jealousy which this intimation created, would have filled me with unalloyed delight.

Attendance on a sick bed is not, in general, the most auspicious moment for pressing, successfully, a suit of love; yet, in this instance, it proved so to the happy Granville. The interest kindled in each other for their common and lovely favourite, and their own dedication of themselves to support her under her desolation, had so mutually endeared Lady Hungerford and himself, that what had not yet happened now finally took place, and Lady Hungerford, the richly-endowed—the rose and expectancy of the court and of fashion—had become the betrothed of the accomplished, though comparatively poor, younger brother—Granville.

A strange consequence of this was, that my joy at his success, great as it was (for how much reason had I to love him), was heightened by I know not what unaccountable sensation of hope which it kindled in my own heart. The disproportion between Granville and his superior mistress was scarcely less than between me and mine; if I could call any one mine merely because I loved her, though without return. Lady Hungerford had five thousand a-year, with the world at her feet. Granville, perhaps, had not more than five hundred, though with high official expectations. Yet Lady Hungerford sacrificed golden prospects to unite herself to a fine-minded man, whose heart she had long known was devoted to her, and whose cultivated intellect and disposition were of kindred with her own.

A very proper reason this for supposing that Miss Hastings would distinguish *me* as Lady Hungerford had Granville! Yet I could not divest myself of the flattering thought that, as far as mind and disposition went, I, too, might claim kindred with Mr. Hastings' daughter; and, as to worldly circumstances, I too had expectations, and more in possession than Granville himself.

Alas! in my sanguine nature—my blind enthusiasm—I totally passed over, not only the little circumstance that I never had had reason to think myself more than esteemed by Bertha; but, strange to say, I left out of the conviction that she was engaged to another. Of such materials are lovers composed!

A second perusal of Granville's letter, however, soon brought back all my doubts and fears ; for though the return of the prince to Germany surprised me, he and Bertha *were particularly happy together*. What could be inferred but that he went to settle affairs previous to his nuptials, which he would return, as soon as possible, to consummate?

With this conviction pressing upon me, my excitement was at its height by the prince's arrival in town, and presentation at court, to take leave on returning to the continent. The papers, too, of that morning, as usual, busy with gossip about the great, had announced my own very conclusion, that he was soon to revisit England, after settling some private business, in order to lead his fair cousin to the Hymeneal altar, etc., etc.

It may be supposed, whether true or false, how this fixed me, and how I watched the prince at the levée, whither I went almost expressly for that purpose.

To do him justice, he might have kindled the jealousy of any—even a favoured lover—so much had he the *air noble*, which he had not been able to conceal in his loose wrapper and travelling cap, when he caused me so much perturbation on the north road. He was now set off by his rich uniform and military order, and I looked and felt little by his side (for I got purposely near him) when I contemplated my own unmeaning coat of olive cloth, poorly relieved by its steel buttons and satin lining, with a thin spit by my side, not to be named with his burnished gold sabre and imposing sabretash. His graceful manner, too, when spoken to by royalty, threw me farther and farther into the background, and a bitter pang shrunk my heart when I forced myself to confess that he seemed fairly worthy of Bertha.

My attention, however, was still more fixed when, after being spoken to, he joined Lord Castleton, by whom I was standing, and in reply to his question whether he was not soon to return from Germany, he replied in the negative.

“We have been told,” said Lord Castleton, smilingly, for he knew him, and had known his father, and spoke with an air of frank *badinage*, “that not only we might expect that honour, but that the cause for it is of a particularly interesting nature.”

“Ah!” said he, in tolerable English, relieved by French, “I have been told so too, by your omniscient newspapers, but I assure you I am not so happy.”

At the same time his smile, when he said this, contradicted it ; for it betokened any thing but a desponding, still less a rejected lover. My interest and embarrassment rose to its highest point.

The words “not so happy” accompanied me the whole day afterwards. How often did I turn them so as to mean every thing, or

nothing. Could they be taken literally? Oh! no. He seemed himself too happy. The intimacy between the cousins could not come to such a termination. The reports of the world—the admissions of Granville—the mysteries of Lady Hungerford, and her arguments from *destiny*—could not so end. It was plainly a little piece of male coquetry in the prince, or a desire to rid himself of annoying surmises.

The repetition, however, of the assertion, in a quarter where trifling is not allowed, appeared to put the matter out of doubt the other way. The queen, it seems, had a private party that evening, and, fond of her countrymen, the prince was not only there, but she questioned him on the subject, giving the report in the papers as her excuse. There was the same denial as there had been at the levée, only the denial was to majesty, whom it would have been unseemly to deceive, and more than once repeated, because the question was reiterated. There could, therefore, be no doubt about it, in the opinion of Lord Castleton, who was at the party, and told me the occurrence.

I passed a sleepless night in consequence; my whole mind *in nubibus*; the conduct of the cousins was more and more a riddle.

CHAPTER XXVII.

I MEET LORD ALBANY IN THE WORLD.—ITS CONSEQUENCES.

Know my name is lost;
By treason's tooth bare gnawn, and canker bit:
Yet am I noble as the adversary
I come to cope withal.

Thou art a traitor;
A most toad-spotted traitor! Say'st thou no?
This sword, this arm, and my best spirits are bent,
To prove upon thy heart, whereto I speak,
THOU LIEST.

SHAKSPEARE.—*King Lear*.

THE day after the queen's party, Prince Adolphus embarked for Germany. So said the tattling papers, this time, without a comment.

I, at least, breathed more freely for that event. Still, however, I was in a tumult of unsatisfied doubt, which I felt nothing could allay, but a certain assurance from the other quarter, either that the engagement did not exist, or that the prince, for private reasons, had misled even the queen in regard to it.

Yet, how was I to obtain the information I panted for? Lady

Hungerford had positively refused it ; Granville seemed to have told me all he knew ; and the still most precarious state of Mr. Hastings, which detained those friends at Foljambe, precluded all opportunity of succeeding in personal inquiries.

In the midst of this embarrassment an event arose, the most important of my life, even if it had not given, as it did, a colour to it, of the very utmost consequence to my reputation and after proceedings. As it gave rise, therefore, to much discussion, both public and private, at the time, and was differently represented according to the feelings upon it by very different parties, I will set it down in all simplicity and plainness as the facts arose, without an attempt at varnish or comment, leaving the reader to judge for himself.

Lord Albany, of whom no mention has been made since the unhappy issue of his quarrel with poor Foljambe Hastings, left England as soon as his recovery from his own wound would permit him. Whether he felt himself so much to blame in having, in so trifling a case, exposed his own life, and caused the loss of that of his friend, that he feared the censure of society, and so absented himself from it till the matter should be blown over (all which, from his character, is not probable), or whether a career of impetuous pleasure in which he embarked abroad, at first, as he said, to make him forget this lamentable catastrophe, but which at last laid such hold of him, that he cared not to return to his sober country ; certain it is, that for near four years he had remained a sort of exile from his native land. The interval he had passed in visiting the remotest, as well as the neighbouring parts of Europe, and after traversing Greece, the Archipelago, and Turkey, had extended his travels over Mount Caucasus, Circassia, and Georgia. These examined, he seated himself alternately at Vienna and Paris, with what profit to his manners or character the sequel will shew.

On his return to London, he found the gossip of the town employed upon the handsome Adolphus, who had made a kind of sensation at the palace ; and as the papers had put the *beau monde* upon the scent, everybody, for a day or two, was inquiring into the story of the two cousins. All were convinced that they had been, some that they were still, betrothed ; some that the contract was broken off ; all anxious to know or explain why.

I had listened rather uneasily for two days, at dinners where I was present, to these discussions, but held my peace ;—when, on the third, I had the misfortune to meet Lord Albany.

It was at Lord Hartlebury's, a valued friend of Lord Castleton's, a veteran general officer of known gallantry, and of high character for honour and good sense, that I met the marquess. Not knowing of his return home, I was surprised to see him enter the drawing-

room before dinner, with a visage and manner of even increased ferocity and haughtiness. I knew him directly;—indeed there was no mistaking his look of recklessness and disdain. Whether he recognised me, though he perused me with his glass, I don't know. He certainly acted as if he did not; and having seen me not above three or four times, and that when I was a comparative stripling, five years before, I acquit him (not having been introduced) of all knowledge of my person.

Nothing particular passed during the actual dinner, and if (not having been presented to him) he shewed me no civility, it was no more than he did by his known friends, who were nearer to him, and over whom he seemed to domineer with a most imperious and offensive air. It was easy to see he was not popular, and Lord Hartlebury himself, though he shewed deference to his quality, was evidently annoyed by his manner.

No one had yet mentioned the common topic of the day, when he himself led to it, by asking if anybody had seen the illustrious stranger, whom the queen and the whole bedchamber had not yet done talking of.

“I have,” said Lord Hartlebury, “and I am not surprised at the impression he made, for he is as soft and graceful in manner, particularly to women, as he is decidedly handsome.”

“Indeed!” said Lord Albany. “Then how came he to fail in carrying his point with that pert damsel, his cousin, my old flame and acquaintance? To be sure, she is a devilish coquette, and has jilted not a few; poor Harry Melford and me, you know, among them.”

Here he looked round with a sardonic laugh, as if to shew either that the fact was not true, or that he was perfectly indifferent to it.

“If you mean Miss Hastings,” said Lord Hartlebury, “I did not know you had been one of her admirers, much less that she had jilted you.”

“No!” cried Lord Albany (seeming to think he had disclosed more than was necessary); “I thought everybody knew that. But I could not long occupy myself with such a country chit, though an enormous coquette, who would flirt with anybody that would flirt with her. Melford, me, her cousin Mansell, and——”

“That too is new to me,” said Lord Hartlebury, interrupting him.

“But yet,” continued Lord Albany “I am surprised, that to be married to a prince, though a poor one, had not charms enough for a person whose father is always boasting, on the mere strength of his name, of a high descent, which I believe he cannot make out. At any rate, the prospect of such an alliance ought to have

cured her of flirting ; particularly as they say the family is ruined, and that supposed fine fortune of hers most cruelly attenuated. She will, at least, not be able to jilt many more."

Had this insolent nobleman stabbed me to the heart with a dagger, he could not have given me more pain than he did by this speech, in which he was by no means countenanced by any one of the party. On the contrary, all looked aloof, some resentful, and one generous one, the young Sir William Wentworth, to whom I had been introduced by Granville, and the neighbours in Yorkshire, though little known to Mr. Hastings, had risen to express what he thought of this slander, when I prevented him, for my heart was full, and my blood boiled.

"Lord Albany," said I, "one would have thought, that having taken the life of the brother, in revenge for your disappointment with the sister, you might have spared that sister, and been satisfied without slandering a lady as irreproachable as heaven. You have, too, in what you have said, disparaged and spoken disrespectfully of a gentleman of known worth, and who, though not equal to you in title, is of a birth far superior to your own. The good taste of such sneers against those whose alliance you once courted, though without success, I will not inquire into, any more than the bravery of it, in their absence, and that of all their relations ; but when you come to a positive imputation of the crime of levity and jilting to this young lady, as proved in your own instance, as a friend, though a humble one, of the family, and knowing the circumstances, I am bound to tell you, you have been guilty of a wilful violation of the truth."

The whole company were startled at this reproof ; yet more, seemingly, from apprehension of the consequences, than because they disapproved it. The young Sir William, too, of an ardent spirit, and who had just got his commission in the guards, absolutely clapped his hands, and exclaimed, "Quite right, quite right."

All the rest preserved a profound silence, though it was easy to perceive they were much moved ; when Lord Albany, after eyeing Sir William, said with more coolness than I expected,

"I perceive I have two challengers upon my hands, to whom I am expected to give battle. One of them I know—Sir William Wentworth, a gentleman at least ; but you, Sir, of whose very name I am ignorant, who the devil are *you* ?"

The whole company seemed again moved by this insolence, and Lord Hartlebury rose to interfere, but before he could speak, I replied,

"My name is lost ; yet it was once well known as honourable and

noble in the history of my country, long before your lordship's had emerged from obscurity."

Lord Albany looked mad with rage, and the table seemed struck with still more interest at this answer, which was increased when I went on:

"My name is De Clifford, once owned by the lords of Clifford Castle, whose resentments, when they had any, never stooped to calumniate a defenceless lady in her absence."

"Right again, by G—!" cried Sir William, who could not repress his feelings.

"I believe I now recollect you," answered Lord Albany, almost suffocated with pride. "I think you were a servitor, or some such thing, when I was at Oxford, and a follower of the Hastings family. It seems that at least you have not forgot your duty to them, and earn your wages."

"My lord," now interposed Lord Hartlebury, "this must not go on. Were Mr. De Clifford not the gentleman I know him to be, he is my guest, and I cannot permit such taunts to proceed. But what Mr. De Clifford has said of himself I know to be true; and as a gentleman, even if he were not in high confidential office under the king, in all but rank he is fully your lordship's equal."

"My lord," returned the marquess, rising from his chair, "you may permit, or not permit, what you please. I take this speech of yours as an order to be gone, and I obey. For this young gentleman (pointing at Sir William), the name he bears will certainly make me gratify the eagerness he seems to have, to be brought into notice. For the other, I shall beg to suspend what, perhaps, he expects from me, till I have made inquiries whether he is worthy of it."

So saying, he stalked to the door, red with passion; but not before Lord Hartlebury, who had rung, said to the servant who answered the bell, loud enough to be heard,

"Shew Lord Albany out of the house."

There was a considerable pause, every one looking at the other, and stealthily at me, in silence; when Lord Hartlebury gallantly said to me,

"Mr. De Clifford, I am most distressed that this should have happened anywhere, but in particular at my table; and I think it but due to you to bear witness, which I shall do in any way you may be pleased to command, to the honour you have shewn in defending an innocent lady from the foulest attack I ever witnessed, to say nothing of the gross affront to yourself; and whatever the consequences, I shall feel honour and pleasure if my testimony or support, in any manner you may please to require them, can be of the least service to you."

This address from the generous veteran seemed to be echoed by a murmur of approbation from the rest of the company, whose social enjoyments being interrupted by what had happened, the party broke up. Sir William Wentworth, however, in going out, taking me to a corner of the hall, said he had something to say to me, and asked me to set him down, when he would talk to me in the carriage, to which I of course agreed.

His business, I found, proceeded from the same generosity he had shewn at the table, when Lord Albany had so disgraced himself.

“The proud ruffian,” said he, “for so I must call him, will certainly challenge you; indeed he never can shew his face if he does not. What he may do by me I don’t know; but when his message comes, my request is that you will allow me and no one else to be your second.”

I thanked the gallant fellow, said it should be so, and we parted for the night.

Well, I was now far advanced in the progress of life; I had achieved what might be comparatively called greatness and fortune; I had certainly acquired no inconsiderable knowledge of men, and some of women; and I had now, for the sake of a woman, an experiment on my hands of the effects of a challenge, which might, and probably would, terminate my own life, unless I took that of another.

As I had never fired a pistol but once, and my adversary had fatally proved his skill, I felt that the former would be the result. But the cause kept me up. I felt that Wentworth’s name for Albany, “Ruffian,” was a true one, and that his rank could not alter it. I felt that he was more; that he had acted as a scoundrel towards her I had defended. His insolence to myself I might have passed, if the customs of the world would have permitted it; at least my feelings would have been less excited, perhaps I may say, less firm, if the wrong had been confined to myself. But when Bertha, the angel of my heart, though lost to me—when *her* honour was concerned! How reckless did it make me? How proud should I be even to die in her defence!

These thoughts occupied half my night; and, spite of many compunctious visitings, I became impatient in the morning for the marquess’s message.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

I AM CHALLENGED BY LORD ALBANY.—THE RESULT.

The wound that bred this meeting
Cannot be cured by words.

SHAKSPEARE.—3 *Henry VI.*

He cannot by the duello avoid it.

Twelfth Night.

THE morning came, and with it, though at a late hour, the appearance of the Honourable Colonel Montfort, a gentlemanly man, of polite address; one of those who, as Sir Lucius says, are in their quarrels as sharp and as polished as their sword. After preliminary civilities, and announcing that he came from Lord Albany, he opened the matter at once, and not unhandsomely said,

“I am rejoiced, in the first place, to assure you that the marquess confesses himself wrong for having presumed to question your sufficiency, in point of birth and station, to meet him in the field.”

“May I ask,” said I, “how, or to whom, I am obliged for having this important point cleared up?”

“To Lord Hartlebury, in the first place,” replied the colonel; “to whom, not choosing to consult him himself, the marquess referred me, and he to Lord Castleton, who, having given the most satisfactory explanations, I convinced Lord Albany that he was bound in honour, not only to waive his objections, but to make you an apology for having entertained them. This he has not exactly authorized, but on my own responsibility I take it upon myself to do so.”

I thanked the colonel for his attention to me in this respect, which I thought comparatively of little consequence.

“True,” said Colonel Montfort, “the real point is the thing; for, from the account given me by Lord Albany, I fear there can be no alternative between you. I fear it, because, soldier as I am, I should be glad not to despair, as I do, of the ample apology I am directed to require.”

“Are you aware of the cause for the provocation?” asked I.

“I believe I am,” replied he; “but I come not here to defend Lord Albany, but to seek reparation for the deepest injury that a man’s honour can receive, whether provoked or not.”

“All my answer, then,” said I, “while I thank you for your

politeness, is to say that, under such provocation, apology is out of the question."

"I thought so," observed he. "May I ask whom you mean to represent you as your friend?"

"Sir William Wentworth."

"Of the first guards?"

"Yes."

"A young, and inexperienced, but a man of spirit and honour. Yet I could have wished it had been any other."

"Why?"

"He is implicated himself. For his lordship says, his life is not worth a feather, unless he has satisfaction from you both. However, I have no right to advise. I will call upon Sir William. The day is far advanced; but I trust you may hear from me before evening."

Thus finished the most portentous interview which in my life I had yet encountered. But all reflection upon it was precluded by the meeting between Colonel Montfort and Sir William, almost on the steps of the house, as the former departed. They immediately adjourned to the park; and in half an hour Sir William returned with an offer, for my determination, of the most sequestered part of the park, that very evening, or Wimbledon the next morning.

An enemy all my life to suspense and delay, I instantly chose the first, and with this Sir William proceeded to Colonel Montfort's lodgings, having promised also to bring me his pistols; I, in the absence of all fear of such a mischance, never having yet provided myself with those instruments of gentlemanly satisfaction.

Left to myself, I naturally engaged in a self-examination, and anxiously weighed my position. Totally unskilled in the use of any weapons, whether of defence or offence, and fully aware of the marquess's superiority, already so fatally proved, I gave myself up to death, or some grievous bodily hurt. This was, however, the least part of my anxiety, and when I reflected that Bertha would know that it was for *her* sake, and in defence of *her* honour, there was even something sweet in it.

But though I had not reflected much on the subject, I was by no means convinced of the lawfulness of duelling, and in vain pleaded the customs of the world, and the cruel blow it would be to my reputation if I shrank from the affair. Then, what was my position in it? Though Lord Albany had been the aggressor, it was not towards me. I might have been silent like the rest of the company. It was I, therefore, who had given the affront, and put him in the situation, which he could not avoid, of demanding satisfaction.

This was not a pleasant reflection, and I had almost made up my

mind to receive his shot, in which case, should I escape, the affair would not go on, and all might be well. But *could* I escape? Or, if I did, was I sure there would be an end? Might he not insist on going on? and was he not savage enough to do so? and would not then the first danger be thrown away? In short, would he not kill me, if I did not kill him? and was it not therefore self-defence?

This reasoning, such as it was, convinced me; and when I again thought of the bloody, bullying character of the man, together with his infamous charges against Miss Hastings, my scruples vanished one after the other, and by the time Sir William came to fetch me, just after sunset, I had pretty well made up my mind to kill or be killed in a cause which I thought so just and honourable. Who ever has scruples when he goes into the field in a national war? Why does he take the field? Because there is no law but of arms to appeal to. Here, though there was the law of the land, it reached not the case of a defenceless and virtuous woman scandalously calumniated, or the consequences of having asserted her cause.

With these reflections, which my spirited young companion highly approved, we arrived first on the ground, the west extremity of the park, beyond the ranger's lodge. The sentinels at the powder magazine saw us, and suspected our business; but it was not their duty, nor did it accord with their profession, to interrupt us.

We did not wait long; for in a minute or two Albany and his friend, together with the surgeon-general of the guards, whom Colonel Montfort and Sir William had requested to attend, arrived on the ground. I saluted them, to which his lordship, who seemed more than usually dogged and sullen, did not deign to reply, but goaded Colonel Montfort to make haste. We were, however, retarded by his own desire for vengeance; for when it was agreed upon by the seconds that we should fire at twelve paces, he insisted upon nine, which occasioned a debate; till I myself, who gave up my life for lost, and thought the only chance I had for my want of skill was to consent to the proposal, desired the seconds (for Colonel Montfort joined mine in refusing the motion) to waive all discussion, but let us take our ground. For I was, moreover, more and more exasperated at this thirst for blood in one I thought a wild beast, and felt a recklessness in consequence myself, which, at least, was not natural to me. We therefore, against the will of our friends, stood at the shorter distance.

We fired by word of command, and it pleased Heaven that I should escape; for the noble savage, as he afterwards owned, resolving to kill, aimed at my head, and, firing too high, his ball went through my hat, and knocked it off; while mine, though without any object but the body at large, took effect upon his knee, the pan of which it broke, and lodged in the socket. The exquisite pain

of this made him instantly fall, and I ran up to assist him with the gentlemen present.

What was my own and their horror, when, though writhing in torture, he told me to go to my ground, and desired another pistol!

Colonel Montfort said it was impossible, and signed to some of the men of the guard-house (whom it seems he had ordered to be in readiness) to come up and give assistance. Two of them went off for a hand-barrow; and the surgeon having done all he could to stanch the blood, the rash and ill governed man was conveyed to the ranger's house, as the nearest asylum, where the surgeon, on a nearer inspection, declared the wound, from the havoc made among the sinews, of the most serious aspect.

In effect, to close this disagreeable part of the recital at once, and return to it no more, the king's surgeon being called in, both declared that life, if indeed it could be preserved at all, depended upon amputation above the knee, which was accordingly effected two days after.

Thus, to my own astonishment, I found myself, by the will of Providence, delivered from a danger I thought inevitable; and apparently by accident, but undoubtedly through the same will, made the instrument of vengeance against this proud, licentious man. Oh! how did his behaviour make me recollect Fothergill's indignant, yet pathetic, invective against the same man, joined with another almost in the same circumstances, some years before!

On leaving the ranger's house, Montfort himself joined Sir William and me in council what was to be done; and as we had all been seen by the magazine guard, to whom the two officers were known, it was settled that we should retire to Calais, until the opinions of the surgeons were decidedly known, and I returned to Green Street to prepare for the journey.

Here to my surprise and pleasure, I found Lord Castleton affectionately waiting for me, having called once before. When I told him the event, he congratulated me on my safety, though he deplored the necessity for my instant retirement.

"As to the origin of the affront," said he, "I have heard it all from Lord Hartlebury, who thought you so much in the right, and his guest in the wrong, that he could have willingly, he said, old as he was, have taken your place had it been necessary. But what you inform me of is serious, and the old soldier has himself made notes of the cause of quarrel, in which he has been joined by some of his guests, who equally approve of the spirit and honour of your conduct. To tell you the truth," added he, "it only confirms what I have long suspected, that the interest you have always shewn about this young lady and her family has proceeded from something more than the mere feeling of a *preux chevalier*. But of this,

nothing now ; your first object must be freedom from arrest, and to get out of the country as soon as you can. Meantime, as it will be all over the town to-morrow, and will soon spread to Foljambe, I wish you to see these notes of Lord Hartlebury, and tell me if they are accurate ; which, if they are, I will send them to your friends, Lady Hungerford and Granville, that you may not be misrepresented where, perhaps, you would most wish to be properly understood."

I could have worshipped Lord Castleton for this consideration, and greedily perused Lord Hartlebury's notes, which I found as exact almost as if taken by a short-hand writer ; and I felt relieved that, upon such an authority, my fame would stand clear, and that neither Mr. Hastings nor Bertha could think I had been officious in defending them both from so gross an attack upon them in their absence.

This I told Lord Castleton was my chief concern, and he promised to look minutely to it. How did I thank him ? He then, as it was too late to send to the banker's, gave me his pocketbook, which contained a hundred-pound note, which, with my own, made up a sufficient sum ; and soon after Sir William coming to me in a chaise, by agreement, I took leave of my kind and noble friend—noble in nature, more even than in rank—in a few hours was at Dover, and in a few more at Calais.

CHAPTER XXIX.

I TAKE REFUGE AT CALAIS, WHERE I RECEIVE INTERESTING LETTERS FROM GRANVILLE AND LADY HUNGERFORD, WHICH PUT ME AT REST AS TO THE EFFECT OF MY RENCONTRE WITH LORD ALBANY ON THE FAMILY AT FOLJAMBE, BUT CLEAR UP NOTHING ON THE GREAT POINT.—AN UNEXPECTED VISIT FROM FOTHERGILL MAKES ME MORE UNCERTAIN THAN EVER ; AND AN UNEXPECTED ACCESSION OF FORTUNE FILLS ME WITH EXCITEMENT.

Since you will buckle fortune on my back,
I must have patience to bear the load.

SHAKSPEARE.—*Richard III.*

ON our journey Sir William informed me that he had occupied his morning before he met Colonel Montfort pretty much as Lord Hartlebury had done, in drawing up an account of the gratuitous and unfounded attack, in all its offensive terms, which Lord Albany had made upon Miss Hastings ; that he had had just time to add the result of the meeting, on his return from the park, and had

left it in a letter, to be sent the next day to Granville, "for yours, and I may add," said he, "my own justification."

I was struck with this forethought in a man so young, and not sorry that my justification, if I wanted it, should thus be a double one from eye and ear witnesses.

It may be supposed we passed an anxious time at Calais, watching for every packet which came in, and which in truth brought many letters from our friends.

The town was, as usual, divided at first, and Lord Albany as the sufferer, and whose death was expected, had on that account a larger body of friends than his little popularity could have otherwise commanded. By these it was said that my interference had been gratuitous, officious, and uncalled for, and I had therefore given the first offence. But the stout and cool Lord Hartlebury soon cleared up all tendency to defend Lord Albany or to blame me, especially when he had laid before that just man, the king himself (who desired it), the same account he had given to Lord Castleton.

This of course refuted the assertion which had at first been made, not merely by Lord Albany's friends, but by the votaries and purveyors of gossip, that, without provocation, I had in the grossest manner given the marquess the lie.

As this had been dressed up in form by the scandalous papers, to whose virtuous editors it gave many a dinner, I thought myself of writing a plain and succinct account of the affair to Granville; for I was tremblingly alive as to what might be thought of it by her who would not, I knew, thank me for having made her the subject of conversation. Recollecting, however, that it had already been done by Lord Hartlebury's and Wentworth's notes, I contented myself with billets, which I wrote from Dover, both to Granville and Lady Hungerford, recommending my cause to the protection of those friends, and imploring that they would procure my acquittal from Mr. Hastings and his daughter of having officiously become their defender.

To these I received in a few days, at Calais, answers that made my heart dance with joy, and almost put to flight the anxiety I was feeling for the fate of the mutilated Lord Albany.

"Rest satisfied," said the good Granville, "for you could not, I believe, be in better hands than your own, both with father and daughter, even without the testimonials that have been received as to your conduct in what gave rise to this unhappy affair. Mr. Hastings (who, I should tell you, is so much better, that we had no scruple to lay the account before him) was particularly pleased with your telling the marquess that 'our birth,' to use his words, 'was far superior to his own.' 'An upstart,' said he, 'whose family were

never known till the Revolution! I want no other proof,' added my uncle, 'of the advantages of ancient birth than this gentlemanly conduct of Mr. De Clifford; nor can I forget that in the old times his Bardolfe ancestors and mine fought on the same side.'"

"As for Bertha," continued Granville, "I leave it to another pen to console your fears about her. Suffice it that she thinks of your zeal for her fair fame as I am sure she ought, and I would add, as you could wish—only I know not how far that wish may extend, particularly now the prince has left us. All of us unite in opinion on the gallantry of your conduct, and in gratitude for your safety, which we hope may not be farther endangered, though the accounts of the marquess are by no means decisive as to his safety."

If this letter pleased me, what did I not feel on reading Lady Hungerford's?

"Console yourself," said she, "for you are *chevalier sans reproche*, as well as *preux*. Far from supposing that the name you have so well defended has been compromised by you, all here—not only the rest of us, but she most concerned—fix the blame where alone it is deserved, and think only of the generous friend and gallant avenger you have shewn yourself to be. I believe myself that I am imprudent in telling you how much, while grateful for it, the danger you have been in, affected us; and when we add the cause, can I conceal the effects of it on her who was most interested in the event? At first she seemed confounded with the distress of thinking herself the object of public observation, perhaps of public animadversion; she was melancholy, silent, and lost in thought; and when she recovered her speech, observed, she did not think there was a man in the world who would have done this except her cousin the prince, or Mr. De Clifford. Her tears then began to flow fast—yes, the tears of this daughter of my heart, who was sought to be 'done to death by slanderous tongues,' proclaimed how she thanked you. Mistake me not, however. Though my respect and regard for you, heightened to the utmost by this proof of your generous devotedness, lead me to give you this satisfaction, to allay the fears you have expressed, you must not construe it into more than it is,—the most perfect gratitude; nor think the abstraction of thought she has been in ever since the event any thing but the natural uneasiness of a retired and delicate mind, at finding she has been made the talk of the world. These things I tell you, my young friend and pupil, because that sanguine disposition of yours might catch at this improperly; especially since the departure of the prince may again call forth spirits which had better be laid. The feelings of this beloved child have lately been too much excited, and in this last affair outraged, not to make me side with her in thinking that the most entire

retreat from notice is the best restorative to her peace. Her brother's untimely and fearful death; her father's danger (though that has subsided); the blow to his fortune (though that affects not her, except as increasing the curiosity of which she dreads to be the subject); the whole matter of Prince Adolphus's visit and departure making her still a public theme; and lastly, this cruel affair!—Confess there is enough to affect and occupy this most delicate, though at the same time this firmest of minds.

“Let me not, however, end in gloom. The happy prospect of her father's recovery has already produced a change for the better; and if this dreadful man recovers too, to repent of his sins, and relieve *you* from danger, and her from continuing the subject of an impertinent world, her sweet nature may resume its play, and she be again happy, as in that time which she says was the happiest of her life, when she taught you and her brother French, and all of you dug in your gardens together.

“And now adieu. We daily watch the post for accounts of Lord Albany, which are furnished by my porter, whom I have ordered to make daily inquiries, heaven knows, more for your sake than his.”

Such was the letter of this distinguished lady to the once forlorn and decayed gentleman, the scorned at Oxford, and the banished from Foljambe Park. It may be supposed that it exercised my reasoning powers not a little to ascertain whereabouts I was. That I was rather thanked than thought officious, set one fear at rest; that I was even elevated, by the thought of being esteemed the contrary, my happier feeling convinced me; that my zeal as well as danger called forth tears, and if so, “tears such as angels shed,” went to my heart.

But then again, why all this caution, lest I should catch at it improperly? Why take such pains to shew that though Prince Adolphus had departed, I was never to return? Why, unless the prince was to return too, to claim rights, which would for ever put an end to all other pretensions?

Add to this, the coupling of his name with mine, as the only other person in the world ready to avenge her, though I alone had had the good fortune to be the champion of her innocence. This failed not to impress me, notwithstanding the return to Germany. No; there seemed no occasion for Lady Hungerford's caution; it was clear the engagement was not broken, and the subject continued one of thorns.

Though my situation, therefore, and the pending fate of the marquess, gave me full employ in other matters, I resolved, as soon as this cloud should a little subside (if it did so), to return to the subject with Granville, at least till the real history of the cousins

should be developed. To this I thought I had now a sort of right; though *what* right, except from the consequence which a lover thinks he derives from having faced death for his mistress's sake, I could not satisfy even myself.

Be that as it may, I walked with a more erect chest and a firmer step to the quay, after the receipt of these letters, whenever I went to seek farther news from England.

The account was favourable. The fever occasioned by the amputation of the leg had been got under, "and if this continues," said Lord Castleton, who gave me the intimation, "such is the dislike to the marquess for his conduct, and so little the disposition to be strict with you or your friend Wentworth, that I am told you will be certainly admitted to bail, even if proof could be given against you."

As for Wentworth, he had grown tired of Calais, and thinking it vastly more comfortable to wait the event at Paris than either Calais or London, he seemed by no means anxious to return to the last to give bail; and perhaps I might have gone to Paris too, but for my anxiety to lose no more posts than were necessary in hearing from Foljambe Park.

I certainly heard again, and that soon, but the news brought concerned Granville's happiness rather than the satisfaction of my interests; for it announced a tide of good fortune. First, his appointment to the splendid embassy he had been so long waiting for; and next (enviable rogue), his approaching union with the female I most admired, and, but one, most loved in the world. What is more, he was instructed by the whole party to request me, if I could return in safety, to accompany Lord Castleton to be present at the ceremony, or if that nobleman could not be spared from his post, to come alone.

The pen trembled in my hand, and the heart fluttered in my breast, when I said yes!

There was yet a fortnight to the time, and I became more than ever anxious for the important certificate of the faculty that my antagonist was out of danger. That came at last; and I own (I hope it was not unpardonable, but) I did triumph a little that this disgrace of nobility, this hateful man, had been so severely punished without taking his life. As the limb was amputated so high as to dismember him of nearly his thigh as well as leg, he was condemned to crutches for life; and as the cause of it became a part of his history, and was always remembered, he could no where present himself but as the calumniator of innocence, and the insulter of a woman from disappointment and revenge.

Impregnable as was his pride, this he could not bear. It was not the mutilation, but the cause of it, that forbade his shewing himself at court, or indeed extensively in other high society; and,

wholly unable to bear the finger of censure to be pointed at him (not so much for having meanly attempted to sully a lady's reputation, as for having been so punished for it), he once more fled his country, and bestowed himself where he was not so well known, abroad.

My return to England was now made easy, and the more agreeable from being hailed by the congratulations of numerous acquaintances, some of them friends. Among the latter, I received a warm letter from Manners, and, to my astonishment, a visit from Fothergill, who had been deputed, on the part of Queen's, to the Convocation, and was in town for a few days.

I had not seen him since my memorable departure from Oxford on the pedestrian excursion which he recommended, and which I considered as the introduction to all the good fortune that had attended me since; and it may be supposed that we were mutually pleased at meeting; though, from our constant correspondence, our minds had never been separated. Nevertheless he came, he said, to lecture and blame me for what I had recently done.

"No doubt," observed he, "the world praises you; and your own heart, and your mistress's heart; but I trust I need not tell you that these are all self-deceits, and must not be allowed to overthrow the plain line of your religious duty. To be a chivalrous knight is a fine thing; to be a Christian is a finer. Nevertheless, I come not to preach, and own that my joy at your safety, from what I must more than ever think a ruffian, made me forget your breach of duty; and though I cannot praise, I am delighted to congratulate you."

At these words he again pressed my hand, and I felt both his blame and his affection as I ought.

"But, now," said he, "as I have but a minute, and I have heard from Lord Castleton of the high career you have opened to yourself (thanks, you know, to your rusty tutor, who first directed your attention to it), pray tell me whether you still 'sigh and lament you in vain,' or whether you have taken advantage of the absence of a certain Prince Darling, by taking his place?"

I was astonished at what I thought this affectation of playfulness, so unusual in my sage tutor, to whom indeed I had related all the perplexities the prince had caused me, but had no thought he would thus treat them. Seeing me, therefore, look grave, he resumed his own gravity, and in another tone said,

"Be assured, I meant not to hurt you by my question, which you may suppose was prompted only by my old interest, and as I once strenuously opposed what it was madness in your then situation to encourage, so, after such admirable constancy, I see no reason, now your position is changed, why you should nurse your affection at a distance;—two things always provided—that Miss

Hastings and the prince are not engaged as to heart or hand, and that your own heart tells you you have a prospect of success."

"Alas!" said I, much struck with this counsel, "will you not think me the same rash, inconsiderate person you used to do, when I tell you I know little as to your first proviso, and nothing at all as to the last? But allow me to express my surprise. What is become of all your strong opinions on the subject of *mésalliance*? Are they changed? and do you at last think that if love be mutual, which, God knows (and mock me not for an upstart fool when I confess it), I have here no reason to imagine, a marriage may really be happy, though the condition of the parties is unequal?"

"Think not," answered he, assuming something of the old tutor, "that I am so light in forming or renouncing an opinion. It is not *my* mind, but *your* situation, that is changed. This makes all the difference, if a greater indeed is not superadded to it in the changed fortunes of Miss Hastings, who is no longer, I am told by Lord Castleton himself, the great heiress she was."

"Lord Castleton!—did he speak of this? I never knew that he took any interest in the family, except, perhaps, for the sake of his niece, Lady Hungerford, whom he almost adores, and who herself adores Miss Hastings."

"Exactly so. It was this, and the interest he takes in you, that made him talk, not merely on the subject of the Hastings' losses, but of your feelings about the family—too plain, he said (especially since the duel), had he even not gathered it from Lady Hungerford, to be misunderstood. But this is not all."

Here Fothergill paused.

"For heaven's sake," cried I, "leave me not on tenter-hooks. Proceed."

"I think I may venture," continued he; "and, indeed, it was Lord Castleton's suggestions that alone made me broach this conversation as I did, so as I fear to hurt you. He certainly did say, that provided the riddle of Prince Adolphus's pretensions could be cleared up, and Miss Hastings could be favourable to a seven years' constancy, he saw nothing in your situation, and particularly in your farther prospects, that ought to prevent her family from listening to your suit. Nay, he added, that upon that last point—that is, as to your fortune and situation in the world—Lady Hungerford agreed with him, but declared that, from causes which, as she did not explain them, he did not venture to inquire into, the thing was impossible. This was on her last hasty visit to town, since which she has been silent, and Lord Castleton would have continued so too, had not your contest with Lord Albany revived the subject."

"Lord Castleton," observed I, much pleased, "is a great authority upon any subject, and what he says of my situation, as to cir-

cumstances, is encouraging. But, alas ! he can know little of Bertha's heart, unless from Lady Hungerford, and there, I own, I have no hope, as that lady has persisted to the last in desiring me not to encourage it, from any thing favourable in her power to communicate."

"And yet," replied Fothergill, "unless really engrossed by her cousin, there is a great deal in what Lord Castleton observed upon it."

"For heaven's sake, what?"

"Why, when I called, I found that, after some hours' work, he was unbending at luncheon, with a volume of Marmontel before him, which he says he is still fond of, for the pleasure it gave him in his youth. The tale was the *Heureux divorce*, in which, you know, there was something like your adventure with Lord Albany. At least Blainzé (though so far unlike Albany, that he was rather a coxcomb than a brute) insults the character of the heroine, vouching facts for it, which Clairfons, one of her admirers, disbelieves, and casts the lie in his teeth. They fight : Blainzé is nearly killed, and Clairfons wounded."

"What is the inference?" asked I.

"What Lord Castleton pointed out from the book, when we afterwards fell upon your subject :—'Une femme se défend mal contre un homme qui la défend si bien'—implying (still, however, upon the supposition that the prince is not in the way), that the risk you ran for her sake would go far with Miss Hastings in your favour, should you address her."

Here the teasing man looked at his watch, and saying he would be too late for an engagement at Lambeth, most provokingly left me, when I most wanted to consult him.

What could all this mean? Fothergill, the impregnable, persevering, unchanging Fothergill, who had for so many years been endeavouring to root out this deep-seated attachment ; who had almost told me to despair and die, rather than hope, much less seek success ; now, as it were, to enlist on the opposite side, and preach a total change ; backed, too, as he said, by Lord Castleton himself, who had never yet seemed to take the least interest, or even to be acquainted with the affair !

Surely I was born to be the sport of mystery, pursued as I was by such contending representations as appeared between this last, and those I had so lately received both from Granville and Lady Hungerford, particularly the latter.

The time, however, approached when I thought I should at least put the matter out of doubt ; for I felt that, once again at Foljambe Park, it would not be easy to disguise the real position of the cousins together, nor difficult to discover from both Mr. Hastings and Bertha how far I was, or was not, in the situation of a proscribed man.

With this persuasion, I began with fear and trembling to prepare for my visit. It was, however, retarded several days by a most mournful event, and as unexpected as mournful, which filled me with distress, and, at first, with disabling grief. The reader will believe this when I inform him it was the sudden death of the excellent Manners. I call it sudden, though his preceding illness lasted some days, at first without any apprehension of danger; for it was only for the last twelve hours that any very great fear for him was entertained. His hale and green old age (for he was little more than sixty), his sound constitution, and still more, his calm and philosophic spirit, gave any expectation but of a sudden removal. But he fell a victim to what has cut off stronger men than himself. It seems, in one of his perambulations, he was overtaken, on a shelterless moor, by a thunder-storm, which drenched him in a moment; and yet, notwithstanding his prudence, he continued for hours in his wet clothes. The consequence was, cold, fever, and inflammation of the chest, which, on the fifth day, deprived the world of one of the best of its inhabitants.

Well may I think him so, and heaven knows how all my other anxieties merged in the great one of his loss, which totally unfitted me for the excursion proposed, while for several days it actually deprived me of the interest, absorbing as it had been, which had belonged to it.

The event happened at Bardolfe, where he was so interested in the fitting up the lodging he had proposed for himself, that he remained two whole months, and had there received the account of my collision with Lord Albany. I know not whether that had any influence in his after procedure, or whether from the warmth of his impulses he had before resolved upon it; but it was after the rencontre, that he annexed a codicil to his will, by which he realized the sort of romantic wish he had conceived, of making me owner of Bardolfe Castle, by bequeathing me that loved old place, and the estate belonging to it.

But what shall I say to the will itself, and what will the reader think of my prosperous fortune, when he learns that my munificent benefactor, having really no near heirs (for his heir at law was most remote, and not personally known to him), had bequeathed the Grange and the estate annexed to it (about 1,200*l.* a year) to his new-found and highly-favoured kinsman? The Baddlesmere property, full 4,000*l.* a year, which came by his mother, he had, with the justice belonging to him, left to his mother's heir at law.

This immediately occasioned a vast alteration in my prospects of every kind, and Lord Castleton particularly congratulated me upon them, though he felt as much as myself for the loss of a friend, who he said (and truly) did honour to human nature.

The event, I was told, would require my almost immediate attendance both at the Grange and in the north. I passed two days at the first, and would have been impatient to proceed to the last, but was too much interested to fulfil my engagement at Foljambe, not to postpone it till after the nuptials. Meantime that journey lay every mile of it in the way, and after apprizing Granville of these additional smiles of fortune, I set out, with what feelings may be imagined.

CHAPTER XXX.

MY THIRD VISIT TO FOLJAMBE PARK, AND RECEPTION THERE BY MR. HASTINGS AND BERTHA.—I RESOLVE TO PUT THE QUESTION OF PRINCE ADOLPHUS OUT OF DOUBT.

My heart is great, but it must break with silence
Ere't be disburthen'd with a liberal tongue.
Nay, speak thy mind.

SHAKSPEARE.—*Richard II.*

My heart beat high as, for the third time in my life, I drove through the well-known gates of Foljambe. I seemed to recognise every tree which formed the avenue leading up to the house. What scenes, was vicissitudes, struggles, resolutions, formed and broken in a moment! What new ideas, people, and pursuits, had engaged me, since,

“Remote, unfriended, melancholy, slow,”

I last passed through these gates, as I thought, never to return!

The sickening feeling of that desolate morning, when I was virtually dismissed by Bertha from her acquaintance, was still so strong in my remembrance, that I actually felt the same sensations now, though recalled in so distinguished a manner.

Yet, did I owe my recal to Bertha herself, or only to the favour of her nearest relation and the most beloved of her friends?

This was a question which I did not like to answer. But, at any rate, I did not return the poor, unprovided Sedburgh adventurer, the comparative outcast, who knew not where to lay his head, yet dared to hug a hopeless passion to his heart preferring its object, with despair, to any other with the certainty of success. I surveyed my neat travelling carriage with complacency, and thought of my Norman extraction with more unction than ever, especially when I remembered Mr. Hastings' little ebullition in the moment of his

gratitude, that his ancestors and mine had both fought on the same side.

So far so good. But how did this affect the main point? Was either the hand or heart of Bertha free? Or, if both were so, what reason had *I* to hope success? What favour had she ever shewn me, beyond the disclosure of the cheerful feelings of a *naïve* and free-hearted girl, in all the openness of sweet fifteen, which had never been taught disguise? After that time, though kind, because alive to kindness shewn to her in hours of great tribulation, what sign was there of encouragement to hope for affection? On the contrary, a most determined and well-sustained resolution to let me depart for ever, the moment she discovered my feelings for her, without a sign that they were partaken; to say nothing of the mysterious and brilliant rival, who, whether beloved or not, must, if report said true, have occupied all, or very much of her interest, perhaps of her heart.

These were reflections as sad as they were obvious; and yet, strange to say, had never presented themselves to me in such force as at this moment, when not only were they least welcome, but when it was of most importance that they should all be forgotten. But thus it is with our poor nature: what we might look upon as friendly beacons, we labour to forget or destroy; and when in a disposition to be directed by them, it is almost always too late.

Will it be believed, that the recollections I have described got such hold of me as I advanced to the scene of action, that I actually debated whether I could not turn back,—when I beheld Granville and Lady Hungerford coming down the avenue to meet me? There was at best no hope now of escaping, and I prepared to greet them as I ought.

I was soon out of my chaise, and the hearty and joyous welcome they gave me dissipated the cloudy thoughts with which I had entered these once happy precincts. Their walk, the air, and no doubt their blissful situation, threw such looks of delight about them, that they both seemed particularly handsome, and I could have eyed them askance for envy, as the devil did our first parents, but that I loved them—ay, as much as the devil hated Adam and Eve.

It is very certain I never saw Lady Hungerford with such feelings of admiration and interest. An approaching marriage, thought I, is a great heightener of beauty; and she certainly appeared more beautiful, as well as more gracious, than ever. For, though she was now some two or three and thirty years old, and had consequently lost the bloom of girlhood, she had not lost that look of ingenuousness which contributes so much to render girlhood enchanting. On the other hand, she had not parted with a shape that was perfect, and a grace that was all her own; in short, to use her

favourite word, that *tournure*, in which, I should say, she was as inimitable as irresistible.

My first inquiry was after Mr. Hastings. He was well.

“And Miss Hastings?”

“Well; but too seldom quits her father to come with us. You will see her at dinner.”

“Not before?” said I, looking at my watch.

Granville and Lady Hungerford smiled with one another, yet I thought good-humouredly, though I own I felt mortified. “She deposes her friends to receive me,” said I to myself. “Would she have done so had it been the prince?” I did not like the omen.

Whether I looked blank and unhappy I don’t know, but I suppose I did; for Lady Hungerford immediately said, playfully and yet earnestly,

“Lord De Clifford must mind and behave well, or I shall repent having got leave to ask him to this solemnity; for pray observe, it was my doing, and not this gentleman’s; so you are my guest.”

“And had the family I am come to visit no share in it?” asked I. “I at least hoped it had been a joint invitation.”

“Your wish was father to this, it seems,” replied the lady; “and if that will satisfy you, it must be owned they fell willingly into the proposal. Still the proposal was mine.”

I bowed; but own I felt a little disappointed.

We had by this time reached the house, or rather the stable-yard, in which a side door opened into the mansion; we having, by I know not what inadvertency, taken that road to it. I mention it, however, only to note the impression it made on me, in comparing it with former times. Instead of four or five stable-people, whom I had remembered always busy about the carriages and horses, one solitary groom was occupied with a low park chair; and instead of six superb coach-horses, and carriages of different sorts, the stables and houses, which were all open, exhibited but one pony, a riding-horse, and a post-chariot, shrouded up in a canvass cover, as if seldom used.

The thought immediately crossed me (and it made me melancholy) that Mr. Hastings, from his losses, had been thus forced to reduce his establishment. At the same time I cannot deny that, as far as *I* was concerned, there was something not disagreeable in it, as bringing me more upon a level with him; while the recollection of Granville’s account of the sweet Bertha’s resignation to her altered prospects gave a glance of sunshine to my mind, and only made me more anxious to see and love her for it.

On entering the house there was the same diminution of consequence. In lieu of two footmen covered with livery lace, who used generally to perambulate the hall, and give notice of visitors to a

groom of the chambers, there was neither footman nor groom of the chambers to be seen, but Granville leading the way into the well-known music-room, we took our stations there without any harbinger. Here we remained in chat till Lady Hungerford said she would go to Bertha's sitting-room, and Granville went out to announce my arrival to his uncle.

Left alone, the solitude of the house, compared to what I had remembered it, was the first thing that struck me ; and I then examined, and recognised, with something like melancholy, many of the gay pieces of furniture, the instruments and pictures which had inspired my inexperienced boyhood with such awe, on my first visit, full seven years before.

But my eyes were soon arrested by an accession to the pictures, which there was no mistaking—Prince Adolphus himself, in full uniform ; somewhat different, because rather more manly from being a little older, and handsomer, than the engraving which had so fixed me in the summer-house. It seemed to have been recently done ; was evidently a foreign portrait ; and I concluded had been but just hung in the place of honour which it occupied—over the chimney.

Shall I own that, however unreasonably, my heart sickened with jealousy. The fact spoke volumes, and effectually overthrew all the surmises and inferences arising from the accounts of my inaccurate and ill informed friends, as I thought them (perhaps with some spleen), when they talked of his departure, not to return. Even his own denial of his engagement, to the queen, seemed clearly now a disguise of the truth, or a mistake of Lord Castleton's, who related it to me. Any way, I thought myself the sport of circumstances. The indifference which was to keep Bertha from her old friend, till dinner-time, was perfectly accounted for, and I lamented, with some *hauteur*, that I had taken so long a journey to visit a person not her own mistress.

In these reflections I passed many minutes far from pleasantly, and was angry with my hosts for leaving me so long,—when I beheld at a distance, in the flower-garden, the two ladies walking in earnest conversation.

For a moment my anger, jealousy, melancholy (call it what you will), fled like a summer cloud. I had only eyes, and certainly only heart for Bertha. I would not believe a word of the engagement ; the picture might have been a mere *offrande* from the prince to his uncle ; the prince could not have been guilty of deceiving the queen ; and my dear, good friends, could not have been mis-informed.

What to do—whether to join them unasked, or wait till I was invited, was the question,—when Granville, joining the party,

suddenly diverged into the plantation walk, carrying his mistress along with him, and leaving mine alone.

In a thousand minds what to do, I watched her movements, which were to her favourite garden-room—the summer-house—and sallying out, I resolved, if possible, to accost her there. As I approached it, I felt strangely perturbed, both from present intentions and former recollections; for it seemed but yesterday that I had parted from her on that very spot, with what feelings of mortification may be remembered. Were they now more happy? Less mortified, certainly, but whether more hopeful remained as much as ever in doubt.

The door of the summer-house faced a long walk of honeysuckle, syringas, and lilacs, forming a bower of sweets, and, hearing footsteps, Bertha came to the room door, fancying it, as she afterwards said, her friends rejoining her. What were my own feelings when, on discovering who it was, she started and turned pale, and, in a hurried manner, closed a book she had been reading, and which she still held in one hand. However, she very frankly gave me the other, and though her eye, at first, seemed to avoid mine, she said, with that softness of voice, which no one ever possessed but herself,

“Oh, Mr. De Clifford, how rude you must have thought me not to have immediately appeared to welcome you on your arrival, particularly (and here she a little faltered) after all you have done for us. Good heavens! what might not your friendship have cost you!”

Here, though her eye was still averted, she allowed me still to retain her hand, while I said, with the emotion I felt,

“Pray mention it not; for believe, that to find you do not disapprove, or hate me for my officiousness, makes this event the proudest and happiest of my life.”

“Hate you! Mr. Clifford,” said she (here, at last, raising her dark speaking eyes, which seemed to glisten as she spoke)—“hate you for protecting the unprotected! and whom you had so little reason to care for.”

At these words the book she had still held dropt from her disengaged hand, and from its well-known and pretty binding, I saw it was the Gresset, which in happier days she had given me, and I had, perhaps churlishly, returned.

A slight gleam tinged her cheek when she saw I had perceived it, but she continued the strain she had begun.

“If you knew,” said she, “the affliction, the terror, which the news of your danger for our sakes gave us, you would not use such words. For, though I see you safe, I cannot help even now shuddering, as I always have, at the thought of—that cruel man.”

Here she trembled so violently as to leave no doubt, had I been

disposed to it, as to the sincerity of her assertion. Recovering, she went on.

“ I do trust Lady Hungerford and my cousin Granville conveyed to you, in part at least, what my poor father and I felt of gratitude for your noble conduct, and how thankful we were that you were preserved.”

“ Be assured,” I replied, “ my dear Miss Hastings ” (and I was most sincere when I said it), “ to be rewarded with such sweet words would not only make me cheerfully risk, but lose my life in such a cause.”

“ I cannot thank you,” said she, agitated and trembling still more, as she almost fell into a chair—and the two or three minutes’ silence which ensued, while she hid her face in her hand, spoke more eloquent thanks than all language could have supplied.

I know not what I was able to think of this—certainly it shewed any thing but indifference, any thing but want of gratitude ; but not only this might be the mere ebullition of a feeling heart, alive to what it esteemed a most important service, and therefore not incompatible with pre-engaged affections ; but as she rose from her chair, and her eye encountered the memorable engraving of her cousin, still in its place, she gave an involuntary, but very audible sigh, and sat down again, much moved.

I was not less so myself, and a silence of some moments ensued, in which I seemed under a cloud of contending ideas. At last, looking round the room, I said, though with hesitation,

“ When I recollect, what indeed I have never for one moment forgotten, the misery and convulsion of heart I felt the last time I was in this place, how little likely did it seem that I should ever see it or you again, all I can say is, that I am grateful to you for admitting me to it once more ; although I fear apology is necessary for having intruded myself upon you, especially as I see it is a sacred spot, marked for privacy, and which, if only for containing that striking resemblance of your princely cousin, it would be profane to violate. The interest I had, and always shall have in it, induced me to direct my steps hither ; but be assured, dear Miss Hastings, it is a liberty I will not repeat ; and only let me add, if I do not offend by alluding to reports so intimately concerning your happiness, that you have not a friend on earth who is more anxious for that happiness than myself.”

The ingenuous, and perhaps too sensitive girl was evidently affected with this address, though the effect of it, from the expression of her countenance, I could not exactly collect. Her cheek became much suffused—her eye cast down—she again sighed—and at length, as I thought, looked so displeased, that I could not help exclaiming,

“I am most unfortunate ; for it is absolutely unaccountable that the man who respects you most of any thing under heaven should be even able to offend you. If you knew my concern at it, you would I am sure forgive me, for I would rather die than displease you by impertinent allusions, and dearly shall I pay for the, I fear, unwarrantable freedom I have taken.”

At these words, seeing that she remained in a sort of immoveable abstraction, which I did not know how to construe, I hastily left the summer-house, and returned to the hall.

Mr. Hastings, who I found had been asleep when I arrived, which had given his daughter an opportunity to walk out with Lady Hungerford, was not yet visible, and I was again left alone, much to my content, for I wanted leisure to revolve all that had just passed. But, except that Bertha, in point of person and manner, was more sweet and attractive than ever (indeed she was now in the full zenith of her charms), I could come to no positive conclusion on what I had seen and heard, in regard to her cousin, though it was evident he was any thing but indifferent to her. The sigh on encountering his portrait, and her apparent displeasure at my allusion to her situation with him (though, had she refused him, they might have been thought not inconsistent with that circumstance), made me think her being thus affected could only arise from her concern that they should be separated. Her emotion in expressing her thanks to me, and her interest for my safety, I thought only natural in so soft a mind, and I augured absolutely nothing more from them.

Such was the result of my self-examination, which I had no pleasure in continuing, when the butler brought me word that Mr. Hastings would be glad to see me.

I found him still reposing upon his sofa, and in truth exhibiting the signs of a person who had been at the brink of death. Yet he had still that high-bred air of a man of birth and good company, of which his recent illness, any more than his retired life, could not deprive him.

Bertha, who had returned, was sitting by him, and exhibited an appearance totally the reverse of what she had been not half-an-hour before. She was cheerful, and even gay, complimenting her father upon the good looks which their little airing in the pony-chair had given him, and herself on her skill in driving him.

He welcomed me more warmly than he had ever done before, and was going profusely into thanks for the zeal I had shewn for him and his house, when, with some difficulty, I stopt him, telling him I had already been more than rewarded by what Miss Hastings had been so good as to say. Upon which, putting again his

white hand into mine, he shook me with it, and kindly fixing his eyes on me, observed,

“All I can say is, you are a brave man, and prove how impossible it is for one who has a gentleman’s blood in him ever to forget that he *is* a gentleman.”

This speech, pleasant in itself, was made ten times more so by my observing, what no vanity could make me mistake—the conscious pleasure it occasioned in his daughter, as if her own mind echoed the sentiment, and approved its application. Her look was downcast when it met mine upon it, but conveyed any thing but the constraint and displeasure I thought I had so recently observed. I had a thousand busy notions upon it, and again thanked Lord Albany for an outrage which had produced me such a reception from those whose favour was of the last importance to my happiness.

The conversation, however, now changed, and Mr. Hastings, assuming a graver air, observed,

“You are in mourning, I see, and well you may be; for, from all accounts, you have lost a friend not easily replaced; judging from his letters to me, a gentlemanly man, and of an exceeding pure old Norman family. What he has done for you is inestimable, for the king himself cannot re-seat a well-descended gentleman in the identical castle of his ancestors, and you may be proud that, through the considerate kindness of this excellent person, there is revived in you a Bardolfe of Bardolfe, for such you are, though your other name may be still more celebrated.”

“It was, I remember, a favourite notion of Mr. Manners,” said I, “but I thought only a playful one, as well as the title he sometimes gave me of son. I little thought how soon it would be realized. I owe him, however, far more than the benefit he has conferred upon me in point of fortune; not less than all the prospects I have in the world; and to crown all, I verily believe, the pleasure of being here at this moment.”

At these words I fixed my eyes on Bertha, and thought she looked as if she understood me.

“But,” continued I, “who could foresee it, when I first, by the merest accident, made Mr. Manners’ acquaintance; went home with him to his house, and only found, by that chance, that he was my kinsman? It was absolute romance.”

“And yet that is no wonder,” said Bertha, smiling at the recollection; “for Mr. De Clifford cannot have forgotten the prophecy of poor Mademoiselle La Porte, who, even in those days of pillage, foretold that he would become *un héros de roman*.”

I well remembered that prophecy, and how it turned my head

¹ See Vol. I. p. 38.

at the time, and was going to observe upon it, when the entrance of Granville and Lady Hungerford, returned from their walk, put an end to this part of the conversation, though I felt a secret joy at the proof thus given by Bertha that the happy days of old were not entirely forgotten; and I began almost to think myself mistaken, at least as to her feelings of displeasure against me, whatever might be her thoughts of the prince, when looking at his portrait.

At dinner Bertha was equally gay. The daily progress of her father; her usefulness to him; his delight in *her*; and *her's* in the approaching happiness of her best friends;—all contributed to give a freedom to her deportment and conversation which I had not witnessed since the days of Mademoiselle's prophecy concerning myself; and, towards myself, there was no longer any constraint, so that she would have been more and more irresistible, but for the incubus, as I may call it, of her cousin, which still haunted and pressed me down with a weight which I could not shake off. Yet our evening concluded with music, in which the harp of Bertha, the piano of Lady Hungerford, and the voices of both, did beautiful justice to the airs and rich accompaniments of Sacchini and Bach.

But Oh! the prince! the prince! Was there no way of clearing up this eternal riddle? Was Bertha's present cheerfulness the result of happy security, certain of being gratified at a given time? and had my friends, after all, and with all their caution, got leave to invite me to a banquet mixed with poison? If so, this pleasing scene could only renew feelings in a ten-fold degree, from which, one of them for months, and another for years, had been doing every thing possible to wean me.

No; I was now finally determined, and resolved that this uncertainty should not last another unnecessary hour.

CHAPTER XXXI.

I HAVE VERY DECISIVE CONFERENCES WITH GRANVILLE, AND OBTAIN THE FACT OF BERTHA'S SITUATION IN RESPECT TO HER ENGAGEMENT, BUT NOT AS TO HER AFFECTIONS.

But as thou art a prince, I fear thee,
As I fear the roaring of a lion's whelp.

SHAKESPEARE.—1 *Henry IV.*

THE next day, in consequence of my resolve, I took Granville to a seat under a wide-spreading oak in the park, at a distance from the house, and had a full and free expostulation with him. To do him justice, whether his own heart was too happy to trifle with

mine, or his sense of justice was concerned, he seemed far more frank and friendly to my views than he had been, so far at least as they required that the question as to the prince should be set at rest. At the same time he desired me to mark emphatically that he pretended to know nothing of what had been Bertha's feelings towards her cousin, or what they were towards *any one else*. He allowed that there had been a great mystery in regard to the prince, which Lady Hungerford agreed with him, when they invited me to the park, perhaps knowing the state of my heart, they ought to be prepared to unravel; but they were restrained by duty to Bertha, whose secrets they had no right to reveal, and whose delicacy they were bound to respect.

"Heaven forbid," said I, "that it should ever be violated by any wish of mine; but I put it to your's and Lady Hungerford's justice to say how far you have been consistent with all your former caution, when, keeping me from all hope of finding her free, or rather from all knowledge whatever of her situation, and knowing every feeling of my own heart, you invited me once more to encounter the danger of her presence?"

He looked convinced, or rather convicted.

"To tell you the truth," said he, "both Lady Hungerford and myself feel that we have plunged you, ourselves, and Bertha too, into a dilemma, from which it is difficult to escape; and our only excuse is in the joy we felt at your noble conduct, your safety after it, and our wish that so true a friend should witness our own approaching happiness."

"For Honora and myself, we see no reason why you should not know the exact position in which Bertha and her cousin stand together; but the disclosure of it, without asking permission, would be to betray confidence; and to ask permission might and would cruelly alarm her. You yourself protest against hurting a delicacy hitherto as white as snow, in defence of which, too, you have shewn yourself so dauntless a champion. Would you press us to do this?"

"Certainly not; but how do you shew me that to reveal her exact position, merely as to her being free, or not free, would affect a delicacy as dear to me as to you or Lady Hungerford?"

"Can we, ought we," replied he, "to do more than she would do herself?"

"Perhaps not."

"Well then, if free, would it not be advertising for an offer, if she were voluntarily to tell you so? If engaged, would it not be arrogating the notion that your attachment to her continues, if she apprized you of her state, in mere mercy to yours?"

"Her modesty," said I, "forbids both suppositions."

"There is but one way, then," answered he, "to get at the

truth, without compromising our honour or her dignity, and that probably you are not prepared to pursue."

"Name it, and let me judge."

"Ask her, herself."

"Would not that be making her a conditional offer?"

"It would."

"Yet you know not her mind towards me."

"I do not."

"Then thus it stands. If I ask, and she tells me her heart is not her own, I may have the *benefit* and *pleasure* of knowing it. If free, I may gain —— what? Her hand? No; but permission to court it, subject, after all, to rejection. But as I am yet any thing but in possession of a return of affection, I must proceed in uncertainty, and may not succeed after all. This will never do."

"I feared so," said Granville; and here we both paused.

At length he continued, "Were Prince Adolphus out of the question, let me ask, what would be your conduct?"

"Thinking her free, I might address her like any other; but like any other, I should be guided by my own discretion, when to think myself in a situation to hope for success before I proposed. Here my very question as to her freedom makes the proposal, and I have no discretion at all."

"If by any other means, then, you knew she was free, you would propose?"

"Not quite so. I would, as I have said, only in the first instance make experiments, and exercise my judgment as to the chance of success."

"I understand you," said Granville, thoughtfully; "you are at least reasonable. I have told you, and I repeat, that I know not how you stand with Bertha. And whatever your hopes, on a regular trial, and however prosperously changed your situation, it cannot be expected that she will surrender on a twenty-four hours' siege, even if the handsome and amiable German have no place in her heart."

I wished the German at the devil, when Granville said this.

"But the question is, whether you will commence that siege, to decide which, you desire, as you have a right to do, information. I have already told you my difficulty, which you have received most like a gentleman. I now so far relax in my answer, as to ask for time. Meet me here two hours hence, and you shall hear further."

I concluded he wished to consult his betrothed, and told him so. He said nothing, but walked away, leaving me on thorns.

To get rid of them, I returned to the house, where, instead of his being closeted with Lady Hungerford, I found him knocking

the balls about, rather than playing at billiards, with Bertha, both of them in the most lackadaisical manner—Bertha waiting to be summoned by her father, after he should have finished dressing; Granville, as I found, to be joined by his mistress, bonneted and cloaked for a walk.

This induced me to ask permission to take his place at table, which was granted with alacrity; for the lady was in high glee at the further improvement of her parent, who had had an excellent night, which he had been pleased to say was owing to my visit having done him good.

“The least I can do for you in return,” said Bertha, “is to let you beat me at billiards; for as you are not occupied with something else, like cousin Granville, whom I now always beat, I suppose that will be my fate.”

“My mind,” said I, “will certainly not be absent from the table;”—and we began; but the lady not only beat me hollow, but seemed to enjoy her victory with even exuberant spirits.

This is any thing but being in love, thought I; yet, afterwards, I retracted, and thought high spirits a proof of a lover’s happiness.

A message from papa prevented a second game, and I prepared to sally out to attend my engagement with Granville.

In my state of feeling, every incident is of consequence, and while I previously took a turn in the music-room, rapt in thought, I was roused by the entrance of my old friend, Mrs. Margaret. She was a lady not used to stand upon forms, so accosted me at once with,

“Lord! Sir, I have been watching all yesterday and to day, to say how glad we are to see you; and they say you are looking so much better than you used, which indeed I see; and you are grown such a grand gentleman, and a rich, and in Parliament; and I suppose we shall have no more wanderings at night—though, for that matter, the poachers have left off coming here. Ah! Sir, I shall never forget it.”

“Nor I neither, dear Mrs. Margaret,” said I, seeing her rather out of breath.

“Well now,” continued she; “only think!—*dear* Mrs. Margaret! as if it was not seven years ago when you were such a very young gentleman, and Miss Bertha such a little lady. But it proves what I always say, like my good master, a gentleman’s a gentleman all the world over, and never forgets he *is* a gentleman. Ah! Sir, we have had many chops and changes since them days.”

“And since I was last here, too, Mrs. Margaret,” observed I; “when you were so good to my broken head.”

“O! that was all along of Miss Bertha,” replied the *soubrette*, but, when I rather caught at this, she dashed it down again by

saying, "Indeed, as to that, she would have been just the same had it been one of the footmen."

"She is always good," said I, and I could not help looking at the large painting of the prince over the chimney-piece.

"Ah!" cried Margaret, observing it; "that is one of the changes I talked of. That was not here when you was here. A fine man that; don't you think so, Sir? He brought it over with him from Germany, they say at master's desire, and gave it to him, or Miss Bertha, I don't know which."

I never longed so much to ask a few questions of any one as I did then of Mrs. Margaret; but repressed my curiosity as unseemly, with the hope, however, that she would go on of herself, in which I was not disappointed.

"Now," said she, conning the picture again, "I cannot see what there is in them there foreigners which they say is to beat our English. I say an Englishman for my money, even though *he* be a prince. And so I said once to my young lady, as I was undressing her one night. 'Ma'am,' said I—but here pausing, and going on in a whisper, she added, "I suppose you know the prince came over to marry Miss Bertha, and perhaps is to do so still?"

"*Perhaps do so still!*" exclaimed I; "I thought it was certain."

But I checked myself, though I fear my countenance told tales to the sagacious Margaret, who indeed had never forgotten former discoveries.

"Why," observed she (lowering her voice still more), "we never could make that exactly out; and when he first came he seemed shy, and any thing but a lover, and that's what made me say an Englishman was worth twenty Germans, though to be sure the prince was vastly handsome. However, said I one night, 'Ma'am,' said I, 'though we all guess what his highness (we all called him his highness) is come for, I don't think he is gay enough for a young English lady. Why, Sir Harry Melford was much livelier, and Mr. Granville, and even Mr. Clifford,' meaning you, Sir, begging pardon; but all of a sudden mistress turned excessive red, and never was so angry with me in her life—nay, she never was angry with me before. 'Margaret,' said she, 'you take great liberties both with the prince and me, and all the gentlemen you have named, and I charge you never to name any of them again, particularly Mr. Clifford;' meaning you again, Sir, though I am sure I don't know why; for the day as you went away (I am sure I remember it as if it were yesterday), she was shut up all day, and never held up her head for two days after. Indeed, to be sure, she was very ill; and master, he was in such a fuss, and sent for Mr.

Sandford, and a packet came from Germany, and that always made all the family grave.—But, Lord bless me! there is my young lady's bell, and she be a-going to drive master out. I hope, Sir, you will not say any thing of this gallimaufry¹ of mine, which perhaps is very wrong of me, because servants, you know, are servants, and should never talk of the secrets of families; but I was so glad to see you, and know you so like to hear any thing about Miss Bertha, that I could not help it."

Here the bell ringing again, she hurried out of the room, leaving me astounded at her volubility, and not a little at a loss to understand her exact meaning.

I had no time to analyze it; for the two hours had expired, and I hastened to the trysting tree, where I found Granville waiting for me.

He began immediately on the expected subject.

"You judged rightly," said he, "that I wished to consult Lady Hungerford. Not only is she a party concerned, but a woman understands a woman's case better than a man; and, of all women, you will not be surprised if I value the judgment of this dear and high-minded lady the most in the world."

"With me," said I, "that needs no proof; but what's the result?"

"Favourable," replied he, "to your wishes, as far as I know, or could answer for their extent. For when I told her that you had assured me you only desired to be informed of the position between Bertha and her cousin, in order to take your resolution, either ultimately to propose to her if free, or abandon the pursuit if engaged, adding the consideration of your augmented fortune, she said she was sure Mr. Hastings himself would think you a proper match for his daughter, and when she considered this, she——"

"Well?"

"She thought the difficulty of answering was at an end; for, far from compromising either confidence or delicacy in revealing a mere fact, which Mr. Hastings himself would be bound to reveal were you to apply to him, as a friend to you both, it was our duty, she said, to give you information upon which a measure so important to you both was to be founded."

"Perfectly well reasoned," said I, "and worthy the right-minded woman who so decided."

"Observe, however," added Granville, "that we confine this to the disclosure of the mere fact, that the engagement is at an end; a disclosure which Bertha's own interest would require, and her father would wish, though their dignity might take no measures

¹ Gallimaufry is old English for a hotch-potch; and I suppose, by this specimen of Mrs. Margaret's, is used still by the lower orders in Yorkshire.

of themselves to reveal it. But farther than this, and especially as to any thing concerning the state of her heart towards the prince, or any one else, I beg you to believe me when I say, I know nothing."

"Not even the cause of the conclusion of the engagement?"

"Of that no more than the fact, that, in consequence of some very painful explanations on the part of Prince Adolphus to Bertha and her father, the agreement was cancelled by mutual consent."

"Mutual *consent*! Bertha's consent!" exclaimed I, in perturbation. "It appears, then, that the rupture was by the prince, and that *her* heart was in the match, though *his* was not."

My agitation moved Granville, who with kindness said,

"I see your distress, and know all your feelings upon it. And yet, though I am not in a situation to refute it, I am not prepared to *agree* in your conclusion that her heart was in the match. But, as I have told you, I am not sufficiently informed; Honora alone is in possession of the real facts of the case, detailed to her in letters from Bertha herself; which letters she could not shew even to *me*, much less to *you*, without a breach of confidence. All that I myself know is, that my cousin is now free both in hand and heart; but whether at all, or how far, that heart was ever affected by her handsome kinsman, is known only to Honora, who, of course, cannot disclose it."

"Alas!" said I, "without that disclosure, it is too clear what she thinks of it; for I now recollect (indeed have never forgotten) that in the letter she wrote to me at Calais, kind as it was, and though the engagement must then have been cancelled, for the prince had then returned to Germany, and she described the warmest interest taken by Bertha in my fate, she was as solemn and decisive as ever in warning me against a particle of hope on that account. How could this be—the contract broken, and the prince departed—if, spite of the rupture, he had not carried that jewel, her heart, away with him?"

"Do not be ingenious," said Granville, "in tormenting yourself; for though I know not more of Bertha's feelings than I have told you, certainly I can depose that it was not a conviction of her attachment to her cousin that prompted Lady Hungerford's advice to you. It arose purely and sheerly from the fear that the warm description of Bertha's gratitude, which truth drew from her, should not operate upon your too sanguine temper to bring you into danger; danger, if Bertha, who never had (indeed from her engagement never could have) indicated a return of your affection, should not be favourable. I saw Lady Hungerford's letter, and was even consulted upon it, and can assure you the reason I have assigned was the only one that prompted that part of it which

terrifies you. Still I am in no condition to unveil the real heart of Bertha in regard to her cousin, which, if even known to Honora, is locked up in the letters I have mentioned, as if hermetically sealed."

I was bewildered with this sort of half-information, but with which, such was my love, I was willing to be content until I might gather fuller intelligence from these interesting letters; and as I afterwards was favoured with them without any breach of confidence, that my reader may not feel trifled with, but understand the action of my story with more satisfaction, I think it better to present them to him at once;—promising to explain, in its proper place, how they came into my possession.

They consist of a series of epistles to her darling friend, and almost mother, describing her situation with the prince on his arrival at the Park, in the capacity of her betrothed, which had, it seems, belonged to them both ever since the dying request of her mother, the princess, and a consequent arrangement with the duke, his father, had invested them, almost unknown to themselves, with that character.

All but one of these letters had been written just about the time of my last conversation with Lady Hungerford, which, as may be remembered, so puzzled me, when she protested against being entangled by words growing out of the difficulties of an embarrassing situation^{*}. The last, however, containing an interesting narrative by the prince himself, was received *after* that conversation; indeed it was only delivered to Lady Hungerford on her return to the Park, a day sooner than was expected. This I mention, because, had she seen the narrative before the conversation alluded to, her language to me had possibly been different. With these explanations I set forth the letters in the following chapters.

^{*} See Vol. II.

CHAPTER XXXII.

LETTERS OF BERTHA TO LADY HUNGERFORD.

How like you the young German,
The duke of Saxony's nephew ?

SHAKSPEARE.—*Merchant of Venice.*

LETTER I.

“ Foljambe Park.

“ I WRITE to you, as you desire me, without concealing a thought. Was it necessary to desire me to do so, who never yet concealed one from you ? And yet, if ever I could be tempted to be silent towards my best friend, it would be on an occasion where all seems mystery and secret pressure, amounting to almost sadness.

“ Far from that ardour and rush of pleasure you supposed, his first address was formality itself. His really fine features, which you know I allowed they were when you admired them in his picture, seemed quite altered, and the sparkle of cheerful frankness which you used to praise, and I tried to think of with more than a cousin's regard, seemed changed into gloom, fearfulness, and suspicion.

“ How different this from what I was told to expect, when at sixteen years of age my father announced to me that, at the request of my dying mother, he had betrothed me to my cousin Adolphus, the son, as you know, of Prince Frederick of Saxony, who, my father assured me, was devoted to the alliance.

“ I will own, at the time, this cost me bitter pangs, as I had no idea of marriage where there had been no opportunity for mutual knowledge. But my good father assuring me that his honour was pledged, and that if, on acquaintance, I should object, it should not be pursued, I agreed to keep myself disengaged, and, as you know, *strictly fulfilled* that agreement.

“ How long has the acquaintance been deferred ? Why, I know not ; yet now that it has taken place, what have I to notice ? The most obsequious duty to my father, and the most correct politeness to me : no more. These characterize every moment of our meetings ; yet there seems little soul in them ; not that soul which I look for and adore in those I am told I ought to love, and which I do so adore in you, my dear adviser, sweet pattern, and darling friend. Oh, how differently does his countenance and manner impress me

from yours ! And when I reflect that he may be my husband—awful, and sacred name!—all my fears of the disappointment and misery which may attend the dedication of myself to the dying commands of one parent, and the urgent wishes of the other, revive, and I fear I am not more cheerful than himself.

“ And yet he is certainly handsome, and has the *air distingué* which belongs to his rank and profession, and, could he banish the sort of mournfulness which hangs about him, he probably might be all we used to think him in his picture. Then his manner, however cold, is to me most respectful ; surely I ought not to complain, because in a first interview there is some stiffness. A German, too !

“ He addressed me in French, which he speaks fluently, and English, but not so well. My father tried to remember his German, and for a moment there was a smile—not unbecoming ; but all soon relapsed into solemnity, and almost sadness : and though, by degrees, he began to look at me (for at first he seemed afraid of doing so), it did not enliven him, and what much struck me, several sighs escaped him.

“ What all this means, or what he thinks of me, I know not, and what I think of him becomes a more serious question than ever. But I am resigned, and firm in my resolution, if possible, to conform to my dearest father’s engagement for me to my mother, made, indeed, when I had no power of choice, and was unable even to be consulted, but confirmed afterwards when I had that power, from devotion to a father I adored, and who said his honour, dearer to him than life, was pledged. Alas!—but retrospect is too late.

“ The character of the prince is amiable and estimable ; and though, under the circumstances, to feel, or profess love at once, is impossible, yet love, as you have often consoled me by saying, may come, and with it happiness. Certainly, in regard to person, there is nothing in my illustrious cousin to forbid it, and then the reflection of the duty I have shewn my father will only enhance it. After all, I am only in the situation of many other females, whose marriages have been made for them by their families, and who yet (some of them) have been happier than many who have sacrificed filial duty, and every thing else, to affection.

“ And yet—but it is in vain to look back, though in doing so I feel requited for what my firmness of purpose cost me, by the thought of my dear father’s content with me ; and very much am I pleased that I had decision enough to remain here, the nun I ought to be in my singular situation. Had I not resisted your temptations to come to you in London, my task might have been more difficult ; besides, that I feel I am more than ever necessary to my beloved parent, who, I grieve to say, is visibly worse. The will of Heaven now, as ever, be done ; but it is evident to my fears, I cannot enjoy

him long. What will then become of me among strangers, in a foreign land? is a fearful question,—as, unless the prince gives up the army, which he can hardly do, he cannot remain here.

“ Upon the whole, as you may perceive, I am not happy, though an expectant bride. Love me, however, *chère maman*;—love me as you always have done, and whatever happens, it will be a consolation to your devoted

“ BERTHA.”

LETTER II.

“ We go on just in the same way we did. My prince cousin is still, I may say, most reverential to *me*, as well as to my father : his attentions unremitting, yet still cold ; as if to fulfil a duty of etiquette, rather than prompted by the heart. Perhaps this is German, but I am sure it is not English. And yet there is something in his eye, and, though stately and military, a sort of *possibility* of softness in his manner, which wins my good will, and *perhaps*, might win more, but for this strange constraint.

“ To-day we walked alone in the wilderness, where poor Mr. Clifford met his misfortune. The prince offered me his arm, but with such formality that I was loth to take it. Yet I did, and with frankness ; for I was resolved, if he persisted in his ceremonious manner, he should not plead mine as an excuse. Did I do wrong, dearest mamma? or only comply, as I meant to do, with your advice in this regard? If I am to be united to him—and, though only to gratify duty—if I have kept my heart for him, as I have been told he has for me, he shall not say it is a cold or repulsive heart. He shall at least have the refusal of it.

“ Hence, I refused not his arm, and I thought I felt it press mine; but, to my astonishment, he suddenly gave a deep sigh, and I could not help saying,

“ ‘ Prince, I am afraid you are not well? ’

“ ‘ Oh, yes ; ’ he answered, in imperfect English ; ‘ impossible not, when you are so good—so full of *amabilité* ! ’

“ ‘ Amiableness, you should say, ’ observed I.

“ ‘ Ha ; you will teach me the English as I will you the German, ’ said he. He then bowed, and tried to smile ; but the smile was too marked with melancholy to be like any smile I had ever seen. Our walk then assumed a solemnity which never relapsed on either side, for he seemed incapable of cheerfulness, and any appearance of it in me became so much an effort, that I at last abandoned the attempt, and when we returned home, I sought my room, and only found relief in tears.

“ But this is not all. The post, which you know comes in be-

fore we rise from dinner, brought him a letter with the foreign post mark, and I observed, he coloured extremely on receiving it, and, without opening it, put it hastily in his pocket. My father asked if it was from Berlin, and begged him to open it without ceremony. No, he said, it was not of the least consequence; but I discovered afterwards, with no small concern, that this could not be, though the discovery was merely accidental. For Margaret, my maid, going into a little cabinet allotted to him adjoining his chamber up stairs, thinking him below, found him poring over a letter, as she says, with tears in his eyes, and that he looked *odd*, by which I found she meant displeased, as he hurried the letter into his portfolio.

“You, as well as I, know how easily Margaret is excited, and I never count much on her authority; but here were at least some particulars that shewed the packet could not be of no consequence.

“The whole evening afterwards, though endeavouring to force conversation, what with his own unwillingness, my father’s backwardness, and my wonder, the attempt was a failure; nor can I omit to observe that, though in his letter announcing his visit, he alluded, however slightly, to his father’s wishes about our engagement, he has not as yet at any time mentioned it. Far indeed this from your supposition, that he came to hurry its fulfilment.

“In fact, our whole time has hitherto passed with the same vacuity and dearth of interest that marked its commencement; and if really I had been permitted by our extraordinary circumstances to have known and loved him, I should have felt both mortified and affronted. That there is a mystery about him is clear; how and when it will be unveiled, I wish I could tell you. The wonder is, that my father, always so jealous for me, does not perceive it; but he is, alas! very ill.

“Adieu, dearest friend—I shall be glad of your opinion and advice, in this doubtful situation, in which the only certain thing is that I am far from happy, though

“Your grateful and affectionate

“BERTHA.”

LETTER III.

“I think this cannot go on much longer. I am sure it shall not, if I can help it. The difficulty is to make my father see that his daughter is not well treated. It is not that the least defect in etiquette can be detected. It is, indeed, too strictly fulfilled. If I come down in the morning, and he and my father are at the breakfast table before me, he starts up in an agitation of ceremony, to

make his bow, as if I were the Queen of Prussia herself. If I prepare to walk, he is all over the house for cloaks and bonnets. The same in uncloaking on our return. But *in* the walk, not a word passes but of the weather, or the growing of the flowers. If we ride, which we often do alone, nobody so on the alert to put me on, or take me off my horse; but then no more till dinner.

“ I wished him once to talk of Germany and his *château*. All the answer I could get was a sigh, or that his *château* was not worth talking about. I asked him about the chase of the wild boar, which his countrymen are so fond of, and of the large forests they inhabit. It seemed to rive him (I know not why), to give me an answer. I tried to discover his taste in female beauty and character; he got as far as Charlotte, in Goethe’s tale of *Werter*, but there stopt.

“ To-day I asked him to teach me German, and he seemed pleased; but he never got beyond opening a book, and then fell into a long reverie, interrupted only by occasional looks of great earnestness at my face, and abortive attempts to address me; so that I began to question, whether his mind was right.

“ Uneasy at this, I absolutely asked him whether he had any thing on his mind? He said quickly, ‘ O! yes; much, much; very much; and you so good, so like the angels—you will hear—but not now.’ And then he started up, and striking his forehead with his hand, left the room quickly.

“ That there is something which deeply affects him, is very clear; that it relates in some measure to *me*, is probable, What an enigma! which none but himself can explain. I told you he had never yet alluded to our situation. Yesterday he did so to my father, but distantly and shortly. Talking of the difference in wealth of the two nations, and the comparative poverty of the German nobles, he said, his father had died poor, as most of the cadets of the nobility are, though high in title, and of sovereign houses. He was ashamed, he added, of being a prince. How would it ever be in his power to support a lady of England, accustomed to such affluence, upon his mere pay? My father bade him put that quite out of his mind; for that his pledge had been given, and ruin would be preferred to a breach of it; but that of ruin there was no fear, though our fortune might be impaired. The prince shrunk from the conversation, and said no more.

“ Now, dearest mamma, advise me what I am to do. Is it possible that I can go on *endeavouring* to give my esteem, I was going to say my love, to a man, however apparently amiable, who, if his own master, shews such evident signs that he is not desirous of it? We are not on the footing even of cousins. If I speak with the familiarity of common friendliness, far more as if sensible of

the ties between us, it seems to afflict—nay, fills him with misery.

“ A week has now passed in this ambiguous, and I should say (*to me*) degrading situation,—but that evidently he himself is under some secret grief, so oppressive as to do away all thought of intentional ill-usage.

“ One thing is evident, that whatever his respect, I have no share of his heart. How lucky, Oh ! how lucky that he has no part of mine ! Yet I have struggled, in the necessity I saw of enabling my dear father to redeem his pledge for honour’s sake, to give him all the affection of an intended wife. How much did this cost me, and yet, you see, had I succeeded better than I did, it might have ruined my happiness, for it is clear he would be the first to release his uncle from his pledge if it were asked.

“ All this determines me to lose no time in bringing the affair to a termination. To-morrow I will attempt it. Alas ! if only honour on his part forces on this marriage without affection, what will become of your friend and *protégée*,

“ BERTHA.”

LETTER IV.

“ The explanation is over. I am astounded—stupified—overcome—yet not lost; and, upon the whole, not displeased. Poor Adolphus ! he has suffered torture, for I really believe he is full of rectitude and honour, which have had a sad trial. My pride also is saved, had I had any, for he *would* have loved me had it been morally possible, which it was not—no fault of his or mine.

“ I am scarcely collected enough to give the details, but will try to do so.

“ Resolving then to bring on this explanation, I proposed walking with him in the flower garden ; and, passing the summer-house, he paused, as he always does, at the sight of his mother’s arms on the side of my father’s. The effect was to increase his melancholy, as we entered the summer-house—that summer-house which I myself for a long time never entered, and do not yet enter, without painful recollections ;—for never can I forget a parting, which grieved my very heart, from the desolation which it caused before my eyes to another, who deserved better than to love a person who could not return his love. But of this no more.

“ I knew not why, but Adolphus trembled violently as we took seats on two garden-chairs, and I soon found that he was as anxious as myself to bring our most uncomfortable state to a conclusion.

“ Far from avoiding the questions I had resolved to ask, he seemed himself desirous to seek the subject, though evidently un-

der extreme difficulty how to introduce it. He began in English, but went on in French.

“ ‘Hah!’ said he, ‘the *occasion* I wished is come. Will my dear cousin amiably let me talk to her with my *open heart*?’

“ ‘I assured him there was nothing I wished more, especially as he had told me he had much to say.

“ ‘I know you have the heaven’s goodness,’ said he, ‘and will feel for my misery; but I must, on that very account, be more *true to you*.’ He then went on in French: ‘You must, I fear, have thought me cold and ungrateful, if only not to be happy under such a welcome as I have received from my uncle and you, and the prospect of such a treasure as my lovely cousin. God knows I am neither one nor the other; not cold, and not ungrateful; and, Oh! if I had but seen you before—if I had but known your worth, your beauty, and your goodness—my God, what might I not have been spared! and she, too, poor, unhappy, and yet virtuous and innocent as she is.’

“ ‘What is your meaning, prince?’ asked I, quickly, for I was startled. ‘Of whom do you speak? How can I understand you?’ Indeed I was astonished and excited by this speech.

“ ‘Ah! true,’ said he; ‘I have been surprised by my admiration of you, my cousin, into a too hasty disclosure of my sad history. But listen to me, my amiable cousin, and promise not to be offended at my sincerity, and I will endeavour to set my embarrassment before you.’

“ ‘Sincerity,’ I answered, ‘can never offend me;’ and I felt my curiosity more and more raised.

“ ‘Well, then,’ said he, ‘the engagement made for us by our parents, without our knowledge or consent—made, indeed, when we were children—will you forgive me, dear Miss Hastings,—if——?’

“ ‘If what?’ asked I, for he hesitated. ‘Speak boldly all you feel; for I am prepared to hear.’

“ ‘If, then,’ continued he, ‘when it was communicated to me (which it was not, till I was sixteen, and got my first commission in the army), I thought it cruel and unjust to us both, and as such, was sorry for it. But recollect, dearest cousin, I had then never seen you.’

“ ‘Seeing he was embarrassed by a kindly fear of offending me, I told him all excuse was unnecessary, for I myself could not approve of such engagements.

“ ‘Hah!’ said he (and a gleam of satisfaction shot from his really fine eyes), ‘do you think of them as I do? Do you wish our’s undone?’

“ ‘I am devoted to my father’s will,’ I replied.

“His countenance instantly fell, as he exclaimed, ‘I feared so.’

“‘Feared so!’

“‘Ah! I see,’ cried he, ‘I have again offended you; believe me, to do so will make me the most miserable of men.’

“‘Be assured, prince,’ said I, ‘no apology is necessary to me, nor to my father either, who entered into this engagement with Prince Frederick, your father, as you say, unjustly towards us, and only at the dying request of my mother, to whom he could refuse nothing, and whose last moments he soothed by it. Nor am I surprised that you wish it broken.’

“‘O! do not say so,’ answered he; ‘do not think, after having known you, I could ever have such a wish, or ever not rejoice at my aunt’s dying request, and the consent of both our fathers—if——’

“Here his feelings overcame him, till he relieved my anxiety by concluding, in faltering accents, ‘if I had not found that my heart was not my own to give you.’

“I was breathless while this was going on; but the sentence finished, I felt a relief I cannot describe. The secret is now out, thought I; we are both free—no fault either of mine or my father’s—honour not broken, yet happiness not disturbed.

“All this flashed across me at the instant, and I believe my countenance shewed it, for he remarked the change, and exclaimed, ‘O, heavens! am I so happy as to have confessed my breach of duty and honour, and yet not be punished by your indignation? O! beautiful and dear cousin, say in words as well as in looks that you do not despise and hate me, and will not drive me from your presence—say this, and I may still be happy.’

“‘Believe me, prince,’ said I, ‘in this respect I am all you can wish. As we neither of us knew the other, you cannot wonder that when you came to us, I felt prepared to fulfil this engagement more out of duty to a parent who loves me better than himself, than from affection for a person, however esteemed, whom I had never seen. And as you cannot be offended at this, so neither can I, that you are in the same situation; and this I should say, if even your heart was not, as you tell me, occupied elsewhere. But you must now go on,’ continued I (for I felt gaily), ‘and inform me who it is that has made you her conquest—who that is to be my new cousin—whom I dare say I shall love. Some distinguished person of the Prussian nobility, no doubt; some happy lady of the court.’

“At this, his countenance again fell, and his old gloom came over him, and, with a melancholy shake of the head, a deep sigh escaped him when he said, ‘No. And yet,’ added he, ‘why should I be ashamed of virtue, delicacy, and lovely beauty, all united with

natural elegance, which equals, or rather exceeds, in interest, all that I ever saw in any court?’

“ ‘Why, indeed?’ said I. ‘But after thus raising my own interest about this unknown lady, will you not gratify it? will you not tell me who she is, and the history of your attachment? Indeed I think I have some right to know.’

“ ‘Indeed, my amiable cousin, I think you have, and shall,’ returned he; ‘but at this moment I am too agitated, too suddenly raised from misery to happiness, to possess my faculties clear enough to give you proper possession of the facts. But I have already begun, and, with midnight labour, have almost finished a candid relation of them all—all which drew me into this position; thinking that the time might come, as it has, when it might be necessary, if not for my vindication, at least to explain a conduct which must have appeared so mysterious. One hour more applied to it, and it shall be laid before you, and God send that you may think me excusable.’

“ ‘As you may suppose, I readily assented to this; he sought and kissed my hand, which I could not well refuse, and we both left the summer-house with lighter hearts than we entered it.

“ ‘At dinner we were both better company, which made my father feel so too, for he acknowledged that Adolphus’s determined melancholy had both puzzled and hurt him.

“ ‘In the evening we walked again, and he then put a packet into my hands, which he called his narrative. He wished, he said, that he could have written it in English, or that I could have read it in German; as it was he had put it down in French, such as it was.

“ ‘On receiving it, I became so impatient for its contents, that I shortened my walk, and begged to return with it to the house, which he did not oppose. And as I returned, I could not help thinking, as God generally tempers evil with good, that if my poor Foljambe’s life was to be shortened, there was at least this attendant good upon that evil, that a quarrel, perhaps fatal to both him and Adolphus, had been avoided. For, with my brother’s vehemence and proud spirit, he would never have allowed what he would have called this affront, on the part of the prince, to pass unrevenged. The concealment of the engagement too from him, in consequence of this unfortunate violence of his passions, was a proof of my dear father’s quiet sagacity. I hasten, however, to the contents of the packet.”

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE PRINCE'S NARRATIVE.

Florizel. I bless the time
When my good falcon made her flight across
Thy father's ground.

Or I'll be thine, my fair,
Or not my father's; for I cannot be
Mine own; nor any thing to any, if
I be not thine. To this I am most constant,
Though destiny say no.

Polixenes. This is the prettiest low-born lass that ever
Ran on the greensward; nothing she does, or seems,
But smacks of something greater than herself;
Too noble for this place.

SHAKESPEARE.—*Winter's Tale.*

No trifling events are announced in the mottoes I have chosen for this chapter, and well do they develop what I have to relate. I therefore proceed, without comment, to record, though I abridge, the narrative which the prince, according to his intimation, laid before the astonished Bertha.

“When my father, Prince Frederick,” said Adolphus in his narrative, “announced to me this engagement, made when we were children, and unknown to each other, I had but just got my commission in my father's regiment, and it was a question whether he should not send me to England to make acquaintance with, and cultivate the charming person to whom I was thus betrothed. Had he done so, much affliction would have been spared; for who that had seen her could fail to love her? But, upon deliberation, the relations between Prussia and Austria being disturbed, I was not allowed to depart from my post, and afterwards, I conceived such a dread of having my affections thus fettered, that I sought, by every means in my power, to postpone a visit to which I had taken an inconceivable dislike. Even my curiosity could not excite me to it; and, as it was settled that the contract should not be fulfilled till I was three-and-twenty, I the more easily found reasons to persuade my father not to hurry the visit. Sometimes it was the military, sometimes the court service; for I was a cambellan to the king. But the most persuasive inducement was my wish to study at the university of Weimar, where I accordingly passed three years—with the intervals which it was necessary to pass with my regiment at the reviews, and now and then an attendance at court.

For the first of these years study was very sweet to me, for I enjoyed the instruction and friendship of Goethe; and though I perhaps was not quite pleased with having been betrothed from infancy from family views, where my heart had never been consulted, yet the universal and uniform account I had received of the accomplishments, virtues, and beauty of my noble cousin, while it flattered my hopes, left my mind and heart perfectly free to engage in literature, or other pursuits and exercises, suitable to my age and profession.

“Among others, I felt a passion common to all Germans, especially princes, for hunting the wild boar; and to enjoy this, I not only profited by every thing like vacation from study, but frequently played truant from my tutor, who excused it, partly from good-nature, partly from thinking the diversion so noble.

“Most of these excursions were unknown to my father. In one of them an adventure beset me, the consequences of which materially affected all my pursuits and views in life. I will relate it in all simplicity and truth, without attempting to varnish any part of it by a partial representation, or to conceal my own weakness, in what I felt and what I have done.

“At the end of a long day’s chase of the boar, I was returning to the town of Eisenach, where for a few days I had established my quarters; the *garde des forêts* had left me with the dogs, and I was alone, when a fresh boar suddenly broke from a covert, and made at first as if it would attack me; but, my horse plunging much, it turned and took to flight.

“My ardour was such, that, totally mindless that my companions had left me, I pursued it, though with difficulty, for the forest was almost trackless. Its gloom, too, adding to the darkness of an autumnal evening, left me not merely incapable of farther sport, but perplexed me how to find my way out of it. In fact, I believe I wandered in circles, so that I was completely overtaken by night, without seeming to have advanced a yard towards any beaten road that might lead to the habitation of man. I found afterwards that every step I had taken had carried me round and round the town of Eisenach.

“In this difficulty, and with the pleasant prospect of passing the night with no bed but the cold ground, I was relieved by hearing the bark of a dog, and soon after seeing a light, which shot apparently from the window of a cottage, I of course approached it, and after some parley with a man, who seemed the owner, and questioned me much as to my business, and how I came there, I was admitted.

“I did not say who I was; but my regimentals shewing I was an officer of Prussia, I was received as such, and made welcome as

long as I chose to stay. This, however, was difficult to settle ; for I was not only several miles from my place of rest, but it was totally impossible to find the way without a guide ; and as the host was the only man on the spot, he could not, he said, well leave his family, consisting of three females—Eisenach, too, being a fortified town, the gates would be shut. It was therefore settled that I should remain all night, with such accommodation as they could give me.

“ My host, who was a *der förster*, or *sous-garde des forêts*, undertook also to take care of my horse, for which he was, in truth, much better provided than for myself, the stables, to which his cottage was merely an appendage, having been erected for the use of the Duke of Weimar, when he came to hunt in the forest.

“ As to my bed, by a piece of good luck, as my host said, there was not much difficulty for that night ; for a lady and her daughter, who had lodged with them for some time, and had the only good rooms in the house, were absent that day at Eisenach, and would not return till the morrow, so that I might have their bed, which, being the *frau's* own, said the *der förster*, was an exceeding good one.

“ The arrangement was soon made, and after a supper, homely enough, I was conducted up stairs into a room, large for the house, and so furnished that I might have thought myself at Weimar or Berlin. At first I hesitated to make use of it ; but both host and hostess assured me that the lady, who was the most kindly person alive, except her daughter, who was equal to her in obligingness, would be quite pleased to think they had accommodated a benighted Ritter. I therefore consented, and prepared for repose.

“ But, first, I could not help surveying the chamber, which would have been elegant any where, but, in this place, was surprisingly so. Two beds, furnished with the finest linen, and curtains of chintz ; a small Persian carpet, japan chairs, and a bookcase of the same, filled with choice works of Goethe, Schiller, Lessing, Gesner, and Klopstock. I was quite amazed ; could not at first sleep for thinking who these lodgers could be ; and when I did, had a romantic dream, such as a gentleman of twenty, benighted in a forest, might be supposed to indulge.

“ In the morning I made haste up, in order that the room I had made so free with might be restored to the neatness in which I found it, and that the owners might not be shocked at finding it had been so disturbed. I would have decamped, too, early, but was seized with curiosity to know who these superior people were—superior, as inmates of such a house. I could, however, get little about them from the *der förster*, except that they had lodged with him six months ; had filled up their bed-room, and another for music, and to sit in, at their own expense ; passed most of their

time, when out of doors, in the forest; and, when in, with their books and music. I asked if he knew not who they were? He said, no, except that their name was Beckman, and they came from Leipsic; that he had first called them Von Beckman, but they forbade him, saying they had no right to it. I asked if they had no acquaintance? None, but the pastor, he said, and the poor whom he recommended; for they were very charitable, and religious too.

“I asked if they were good-looking, particularly the young lady, but immediately checked myself, for I thought of England. He, however, would not let this pass, but laughed, and said I had better wait and judge for myself; but that, to his mind, an angel could not be more beautiful than the *fraulein*.

“At that instant I was enabled to make the judgment he suggested, for the noise of wheels announced their return in a caleche, from which they alighted, the younger lady with such grace and airiness, as bespoke the nymph-like being she was. I, however, could not see her face, for she was busied with assisting her mother, to whom she seemed to shew the most affectionate attention. When she turned, however, and came in, I thought my host's account was true, for never had my young experience seen her equal, whether in the salons of Dresden or Berlin. I had, within a few days, been enchanting myself with the perusal of Charlotte and Werter; the image of Charlotte, spite of England, was deep in my heart, and that image seemed here realized. Heaven defend me, thought I, from the fate of Werter.

“It may be supposed that the ladies were surprised at seeing a young hussar in such a place, though, as the garrison of Eisenach was not very far off, they accounted for it; but when, as I thought it right by myself, I revealed who I was, and the history of my coming all the way from Weimar, and being benighted in the Schwienforst, in pursuit of a boar, was told them, partly by the landlord, partly by myself, their wonder revived, and the elder lady asked, rather anxiously as I thought, though with perfect good breeding, where and how I could have been accommodated; then, seeing that honest Hermann, the landlord, began to be a little confused, while preparing to explain, she anticipated him, and with a politeness, amounting to benevolence, which I never forgot, ‘I see,’ she said, ‘that what I hoped is true, and that you have at least had a little better accommodation than the other chambers of this poor place could afford. My absence I shall look upon as fortunate, if it has saved your lordship from such an inconvenience.’

“While I lost not a word of this well-bred address of the elder lady, I could not move my eyes from the countenance of the younger. Ingenuousness and freshness were its chief characteristics; for never did I see one so dazzling with youth and health, yet so

corrected by a downcast modesty. To describe it, is impossible—to escape it, was hopeless. Her eye spoke ten thousand languages, yet I never could find out its colour, so varied was its expression, yet so soft the feelings it seemed to convey. It lightened—it languished—it commanded—it entreated—and when it did the last, what heart could withstand it? Mine could not; did not; for in less than ten minutes I was her captive, never again to be free.

“We adjourned to the sitting-room above stairs, of which Madame Beckman did the honours with the same ease and self-possession as I had remarked below; while the young Mathilde, from the mere display of her sweet manners and unaffected nature, completed the conquest which her outward charms had begun. Pardon me, dear cousin, if never having seen you—wholly ignorant of the attractions I now witness, which, if known, would have rendered me insensible to all I have been relating; and, moreover, not in good humour with an engagement, made for me without my consent—pardon me, I say, if I forgot England—forgot you—forgot my father, and thought of nothing but the beaming houri that stood before me. As you have told me to relate to you honestly, and without reserve, all my feelings, you see how I obey you.

“But if this was my situation at first sight of the little fairy Mathilde, then only sixteen (myself but twenty), what was it afterwards, when not only her personal charms, but her very sweet character, of which yours so much and so continually reminds me, were unfolded in a manner to enhance them a hundred-fold? Can you be surprised if I felt, what I thought this terrible engagement, more and more irksome, and that I resolved to adopt all possible means to avoid one who was unknown, for the sake of her who was known. There was in this, dear cousin, no treason to you, and, from what I shall relate, nothing but loyalty to Mathilde.

“Not to detain you too long, the impression made both by Mathilde and her mother was deep and lasting. Obligated to return to Eisenach, if only for clothes, I was uneasy till I again found myself at Hermann’s cottage, which I did the next day, and met a reception that won me still more. An uncommon politeness in the mother, and a visible joy in the daughter, played havoc with my imagination. A third visit, of the same character, only made the impression more absorbing, and all notion of hunting wild boars, or studying at Weimar, or joining my regiment, or waiting at court, was forgotten.

“The intimacy, thus commenced, proceeded, and I so far learned the history of Madame Beckman’s retirement, as to find that it was to avoid some very improper advances of a very great person, a prince of a royal house, who persecuted the young and beautiful Mathilde with addresses, which neither were, nor, from his rank,

could be, honourable. The widow of one of the professors of Leipsic—still residing there—Madame Beckman could not, while in the place, escape the persecution, and she retreated to this forest, to remain *incognito*, till the prince should have finished his studies, and removed from the university.

“Madame Beckman was every way an excellent person, and after she became familiarized with my rank, treated me almost like a son, as Mathilde did like a brother, though she never would call me so, but odiously persisted in the ceremonial of *Monseigneur* and *Altesse*.

“In consequence of this, Madame Beckman gave me serious counsel upon my truant conduct. She told me truly that it would ruin me with my father and my sovereign, not to mention that my obvious partiality to Mathilde would ruin herself; and entreated, even with tears, that I would return to Berlin.

“At these moments Mathilde would shed tears too, and if she spoke, it was to second her mother; but something secretly whispered me that her heart was, on these occasions, at variance with her tongue. I was, however, obliged to obey my father and my king, and, for a time at least, tear myself away, with a resolution, not concealed, that I would take the earliest possible opportunity to return.

“Frequently I examined myself on the subject of my engagement; but my heart being now positively given to another, my original aversion to it was heightened in a tenfold degree, and I was more than ever ingenious in fabricating excuses against the visit to England.

“This did not escape my father, who before had had his suspicions of the fact, but was now put out of all doubt by an occurrence, honourable to Mrs. Beckman, but sinister, I thought, to me. One morning, having sent for me to his chamber, where he was ill, I found him with an open letter in his hand, which he immediately put into mine, and told me to read it. It was from Madame Beckman, and, as I never forgot a word of it, I will record it here.

““The Sub-keeper Hermann’s cottage,
in the Schweinfurst, Eisenach.

““MY LORD,—It is with regret and unwillingness that I intrude myself upon your highness; but duty to myself, as well as to your illustrious family, and, above all, to the prince, your noble son, compels me to apprise you of the delicate and dangerous position in which his warm heart, and most generous temper, have involved him. By a mere accident in hunting, he discovered the retired place where myself and my daughter were lodging; he re-

peated his visits till I was fearful of the consequences ; for I cannot conceal from your highness, that his partiality to my daughter was not disguised, and would I could say that his attentions had been without effect upon her young heart. Knowing the insurmountable distance between our humble family and your highness's illustrious house, I trembled for the consequences ; for the prince's honourable nature left me no doubt of his intentions, and I often, with tears, entreated him to leave us in our obscurity. But he would not listen, and when recalled by your parental mandate from Weimar, where he was supposed to be, he intimated his determined resolution to visit us again.

“ ‘ I have but one line of duty to pursue, which is to inform your highness of this situation of your son, in order that your highness may take such precautions as your rank may demand, for its preservation from the danger to which a misplaced affection may expose it.

“ ‘ I am, with due respect,

“ ‘ Your highness's servant,

“ ‘ GUNDRED BECKMAN.

“ ‘ Widow of Professor Willelm Beckman, of the University of Leipsic.’

“ ‘ My agitation, while reading this letter, may be conceived, especially as my father fixed his eyes upon me during the whole time. His temper was remarkably cool, but honourable and determined, and it appeared in the tone and manner in which he said, ‘ Well, Sir, what do you think of it ? ’ To which I replied, ‘ As the letter of a noble-minded woman, who has written truth in every word of it.’

“ ‘ So far you are yourself true to her,’ said my father. ‘ How far you are so to your relations in England, who have preserved their honour towards us, or how far to your ancestors, from whom our descent is among the few now in existence, which are spotless on all sides, I leave you to judge. I suppose from this letter you have already contemplated a *mésalliance*.’

“ ‘ Father,’ I replied, ‘ I never have deceived you, and never will.’

“ ‘ Wait then, at least,’ answered he, ‘ till this tottering frame of mine has sunk. Let me not witness the disgrace. Promise me never to visit these ladies again while I live. Ladies they evidently are, although the customs of the world deny them that title.’

“ ‘ I promise you, my dear father,’ replied I, in agitation. ‘ On the other hand, though I presume not to make a condition, and therefore do not demand a promise, let me hope that you will not

insist upon this English visit, at least till my time has expired, and I am three-and-twenty.'

" 'Depending upon your own good faith, I will not,' said my father. 'Leave me, for I am not well.'

"Nor was he, for though not apparently in danger he had the seeds of a mortal disease beginning to shew themselves in him; and from the chamber which he had sought, as he thought, for a few days' relief, he never afterwards stirred. Yet he did not immediately die, and before his death I had the satisfaction of reading his answer to the letter of Mathilde's mother, in which he bore the highest testimony of respect and gratitude to that honourable woman.

"There was now a prodigious alteration in my views. I was no longer under any control but my own, and I thought I had a right to dispose of my heart as I pleased. It was a right given by nature to man, which nobody could take from him. But I behaved like a coward. Instead of coming to fair and open explanations with you and my uncle on the subject, I was sullen and silent, and, in fact, shrank from you with fear. Yet I resolved ultimately to go over to England, to throw myself at your feet, and confessing my predilection for another, to leave it to you to exact the performance of our engagement or not. Had I done this immediately, or done no more, perhaps I might not have been so much to blame; but meantime, and before this was done, I pursued Mathilde.

"As soon as my affairs, and the sincere grief I felt for my excellent parent, permitted, I flew to Hermann's cottage; but the birds were flown.

"The removal from the University of the royal personage whose designs had forced them into exile had left them free, and they had returned to Leipsic. Hither I followed them, and had the delight of finding myself rapidly advancing in Mathilde's affection; when I awakened as from a dream, in which I had too sadly lost myself, by the reflection of my total want of power, consistently with honour, to continue the career I was pursuing.

"The thought, as if it had never occurred before, came like a thunder-clap upon me; I felt agonized, maddened, and despairing of pardon, either from you or the Beckmans. But I at last resolved to execute the design I had conceived, of going to England and throwing myself on your mercy. It was impossible, I felt, that your heart could be in the least interested. It was a mere family arrangement, out of which, if you thought as I did, I trusted my retreat would not be difficult. In truth, I feared by uncle more than you. With this resolution I fled from Leipsic, and came to Foljambe Park. You know the rest."

So closed the narrative, which produced a complete settlement of the question as to the engagement in the mind of Bertha, relieving her, as she said to Lady Hungerford, from all anxiety, and restoring her to herself.

Uncertainty, however, and uneasiness too, remained in regard to Mr. Hastings, who was too ill to be agitated by such an important alteration in his views, and whose feelings might have been sensibly hurt by it, even if well.

It was to aid her friend in her embarrassment that Lady Hungerford flew to her, on the receipt of her last letter; but the increasing illness of Mr. Hastings prevented for some time all communication of the affair. The great and unexpected improvement in his health had, however, at length permitted it, nor did it produce any shock. The assurance which Bertha gave him, and which her whole demeanour confirmed, that the change was rather satisfactory to her than otherwise; and the evidence which the letters and narrative I have just transcribed gave, that had the engagement proceeded, it would have ended in the misery of both; all this had its due weight with his right-judging mind. He was indeed himself relieved from no small anxiety for his darling child, occasioned by a delay for which he could not account; and as his honour was totally uncompromised, and he appeared even in the character of a generous friend to his nephew, in releasing him from his fetters, the effect upon his peace, and therefore his health, was really beneficial.

It remains to add, by way of completing the history of what may be called this romance, that my conjecture was right as to the ignorance of the engagement on the part of Foljambe. This, according to Granville, who told it me, arose from the fear of the overbearing pride and violence of his temper, aiming, even at that young age, at nothing less than the control of his whole family; but particularly from the fear of the affected contempt which he always expressed for the German alliance, and the virulent opposition he would certainly have made to drawing it closer. His father, therefore, imposed silence on Bertha, and kept it himself, during Foljambe's life; and Granville and Lady Hungerford were the only confidants of the secret, after the death of Foljambe; hence their late extraordinary mystery with me, and hence Foljambe's zealous recommendation, when alive, of the proposals of the two other suitors.

Having thus, I trust, enlightened my readers on what they might think the perplexing story of the prince, I now proceed with my own.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

ANOTHER RIVAL APPEARS ON THE SCENE, WHICH MIGHT OCCASION ALARM, BUT SINKS BEFORE MY CONFIDENCE IN BERTHA'S CHARACTER.

The four winds blow in from every coast
Renowned suitors.

SHAKSPEARE.—*Merchant of Venice.*

HAD I myself been allowed to peruse the letters and narrative which I have just set before my reader, almost as much in pity to him as for my own convenience in relating my story, it may be supposed that I should have proceeded in my interesting undertaking with far different hopes, and in far different spirits, than those which actually possessed me. It is certain, that although, as I have stated, I was so devoted to the feeling that absorbed me, and of so sanguine a temperament, that I was contented to pursue my design, yet I wished for something far more real, and better set off as to particulars, than the mere naked assurance, though upon such good authority as the friends who gave it, that Bertha's heart as well as hand was free.

At any rate, did I gain any thing by this in regard to myself? Was there the smallest encouragement held out to me that, because the prince (from whatever cause) had failed, I should succeed? How much might also depend upon the cause of that failure, which the reader will recollect I did not at this time know, and was therefore left to pursue my way, in almost as uncomfortable a state of ignorance of the details, as I had so long been struggling with as to the fact itself.

Upon the whole, therefore, my conferences with Granville, though they so far encouraged hope as to relieve me from fear of the prince, it was a hope by no means amounting to confidence; and in the midst of the satisfaction of being delivered from the terror of one rival, my peace was somewhat disturbed by the threatening announcement of another.

Granville was as usual the channel of the intelligence, and from the time he took for it, which was just half-an-hour before dinner, I accused him of the ill nature of an intention to spoil that necessary meal. Having finished his own toilet, he came to me while at mine, and my valet having retired, he asked me at once, and, as I thought, rather abruptly, whether the intelligence he had given me

as to Bertha's freedom, had produced any, and what determination as to my own conduct?

"You seem in a hurry," said I; "yet, upon my faith, the scanty materials you have given me, by which to shape my resolution, do not appear to require any particular haste."

"More, perhaps," returned he, "than you are aware of, for young Mansell comes here to-night."

"And what then?"

"Why, then, he means to enter the lists with you, as a suitor to his cousin; and who knows but he may succeed?"

"I do," replied I, with great firmness. "You might as well suppose that if he had offered to Lady Hungerford, before your worship appeared, her ladyship would have married him."

"And yet Venus married Vulcan;—and a fresh-coloured Yorkshire squire, with good blood in his veins——"

"Well?"

"Though a bit of a blockhead, and not able to dance as you do——"

"Well?"

"Yet with eight thousand a-year——"

"Well?"

"May be thought as good for a husband, as the blacksmith was by the Goddess of Beauty. Such qualifications have won many a sentimental lady, fond of dancing too (though he is such a clown at it), before now. I assure you I am horribly afraid."

"So am not I."

"Well, but Honora is. Will not that shake you?"

"No."

"What has made you so confident?"

"Heaven knows, as for my own success, I am not so—but if success were to depend upon comparison, I dare enter the lists with him. I cannot give Bertha eight thousand a-year, but I can give what he never can, a heart and a mind fully able to understand and appreciate her perfections; and much I mistake if she would not value this more than a dozen coaches and six. Whom she may love I know not, but of this I am sure, that—

'Her love, more noble than the world,
Prizes not quantity of dirty lands.'

"*Molto bravo!*" cried Granville; "but at least prepare for the trial, for, as I told you, Mansell comes here to-night."

Granville then told me a most amusing trait of this distinguished young gentleman, which, however, deserved not so much laughter as he bestowed upon it, for it shewed a modesty for which we had

not given him credit. It seems he had always, and for years, felt—to use his own expression—a *sneaking kindness* for his cousin. The prince's visit had frightened him; but that over, he resolved to lose no more time, lest, to use the same language, somebody else should snap her up.

This he said in a letter to Granville, containing also the most precious document of all—no less than the letter of the squire himself, making his proposal to his cousin, accompanied by the characteristic request, that he (Granville) would look it over and correct it for him, before he arrived to present it. “For,” said he, “as you are an author, and have written several things about love, which, I have heard say, are very pretty, you must be a judge of the proper style, and therefore I beg you to help me, being not much used to that sort of thing myself.”

Granville here continued to laugh so heartily, that I accused him of injustice to what seemed a most praiseworthy modesty.

“But pray,” said I, “may I ask your opinion of the composition? I do not, of course, ask to see it.”

“No; honour forbids that; but thus much I may be permitted to tell, that it is written in a good school-hand, almost all well spelt; and though the sentimental part cannot be complimented, yet as to style, it is so original, that it is impossible to correct it without destroying its genuineness.

“There is also another despatch,” continued Granville, “which I am charged to deliver to his uncle, in which he at least shews generosity, if not delicacy; for he tells him, by way of bribe, that, in consideration of his late losses, he will take Bertha without a fortune.”

“At any rate,” said I, growing serious, “this is a matter not to be lightly treated.”

“Certainly not,” replied he; “for though I thought it but due to our friendship to tell you this the moment I received it, which was not half an hour ago, I thought myself bound to lay it before my uncle directly, whatever may become of the letter to Bertha.”

“I cannot say you are wrong,” answered I, losing all disposition to be amused; “and who knows how it may be taken by Mr. Hastings?”

“I think I can tell you,” said he. “It will ruin him with his uncle directly; for the offer, particularly for the reason assigned, will be considered as a deadly affront, both by father and daughter.”

I felt re-assured, but was struck by my friend's assuming a graver air than he had hitherto shewed, when he said,

“Although we have but one opinion as to the result to Mansell—”

“Who are the *we*?” interrupted I, “unless that dear Lady

Hungerford is apprised of the matter, and has condescended to be interested as to my share in it."

"I need not tell you that she is," said Granville, "and she thinks it may and must lead to a serious decision on your part, which may considerably affect, nay, alter your present position: hence my question to you when I came in."

"For God's sake, let me know it," returned I, now in downright alarm. "But Lady Hungerford cannot think this rich churl worthy of Bertha."

"That she does not," answered he; "but as no other person is in view, and the field perfectly open, free from even expectation of any other—"

"And can that be?" again interrupted I. "Have I disguised myself so well? Has a seven years' constancy, continued even after rejection; a disclosure torn from me by madness; a life risked, and renewed devotion; have all these spoken so indistinctly as to convey no meaning? Surely, they are and must be convinced that—"

"Patience, patience, impetuous youth," cried Granville, "nor suppose that because you feel every beat of your own heart, others are bound to do so too. In truth, I believe Mrs. Margaret, who discovered you before, is the only one of the family besides ourselves who has had the sagacity to penetrate you now. For, emboldened by the familiarity which she has been indulged in by all whom she knows, she said to me only this morning, she was as sure as sixpence that Mister Clifford was *still* in love with her lady."

"And you?"

"I could only laugh, and did not desire her to inform Bertha of it, who without that, I am persuaded, has no suspicion."

"Well, Sir," said I, not a little impatiently, "and what has this to do with Lady Hungerford's surmise?"

"A great deal," replied he; "for don't you perceive that while there is not a suspicion, on the part of either Bertha or her father, that there is a competition for her hand, a single offer has, at least, a better chance of being listened to? and though he is coarse and rough, yet, as he has no vice, is of their own blood, and rich withal, his sister rather a favourite, and in the same county too—"

"O! hold," cried I, more and more uneasy; "you need not go on to enumerate his advantages, but say at once what Lady Hungerford thinks about him."

"Not so much about him," proceeded Granville, "as about yourself, in regard to whom she thinks it unfair that Mr. Hastings certainly, if not Bertha, should be called upon to decide upon a case, when all is not before them; in short, when there are two strings to their bow, to act as if there were but one."

“ And what does that imply ? ” said I, a good deal embarrassed, for I saw there was but one answer.

“ Why, what you plainly forestal,” replied he ; “ though I am aware of all the danger to your delicacy and independence, and as jealous for them as yourself. No ; Bertha must know nothing of your wishes or intentions. But with regard to her father it is different ; and it will only be calling upon you to put the principle I have sometimes heard you lay down into practice, that a suitor should always disclose his wishes to the parent, before he opens them to the child, from the fear lest, if he secure the affection of the child, and difficulty occur with the parent, a great evil might arise which might have been avoided.”

“ I have held that opinion,” said I, “ which I do not retract when I own my hesitation to speak to Mr. Hastings first. For this might only produce rejection, which never, without mockery, could be set at defiance by perseverance ; while favour on his part would by no means amount to acceptance on hers. Then, as to addressing herself at present, you know, and allow, my objections. The consequence is, I dare not open myself to either. On the other hand, I should wrong the ideas I have of Bertha’s sweet character, if I did not leave it to itself in judging intrinsically upon the merits or demerits of any one who addressed her, without influence or bias from any thing extraneous. Shall I own to you, that with all my sense of inferiority to her in every light that can be imagined, I should feel little flattered at being merely preferred to this dolt, who certainly sat for Pope’s description of a country lover :—

‘ Who visits with a gun, presents you birds,
Then gives a smacking kiss, and cries, no words ;
Or with his hound comes hallooing from the stable,
Makes love with nods, and knees beneath the table ;
Whose laughs are hearty, though his jests are coarse,
And loves you best of all things—but his horse.’ ”

“ To that,” replied Granville, “ every one that knows you both must assent ; but what is the result ? ”

“ That I will cling to my persuasion, my invincible assurance, that, even though Mr. Hastings were to recommend it, and it were a thousand times more advantageous, the gentle but firm spirit of his daughter would refuse the alliance.”

“ I believe you are right,” returned Granville ; “ nor will I tax you with much vanity, in not being afraid of such a rival, were you both to appear as candidates together ; though of the prudence of leaving the field open to all the chances there are for him, if left alone, but of which he might be so instantly deprived by your mere appearance, I am not so sure.”

“If Bertha’s unaided choice,” returned I, “weighing her pure silver against this dross, does not reject it, in the language of my Shaksperian ancestor,

‘Upon my honour, for a silken point,
I’ll give my barony.’ ”

“My lord baron,” replied Granville, with some irony, “I only wish you had your barony to give; and as the dinner bell is ringing, I humbly take my leave.”

By this I found that he was not too well pleased with my rejection of his advice; but buoyed up by my conviction that Bertha, even were she portionless, would never stoop to be the wife of a man by nature made for a groom, I could not repent my decision.

CHAPTER XXXV.

FARTHER UNCERTAINTIES ABOUT BERTHA.—I FEEL LOST AMID A CROWD OF SUPERIOR INTERESTS.—PICTURE OF MY NEW RIVAL, AND OF THE SUCCESS THAT ATTENDED HIM.

Ay, that’s a colt indeed, for he doth nothing but talk of his horse, and he makes it a great appropriation of his own good parts, that he can shoe him himself. I am much afraid that my lady his mother played false with a smith.

SHAKSPEARE.—*Merchant of Venice*.

AT dinner we were all, I thought, strangely quiet, or rather absent. Whether Mr. Hastings had already communicated Mansell’s advance to his daughter or not, both of them seemed occupied with anything but what was before them. Whether, too, Granville was really angry with me, and had made Lady Hungerford share his anger, I could not tell, but both were grave and *distract*.

For myself, though I can hardly account for it, I never was so little so. I believe I felt a sort of triumph in having, as I thought, done such justice to Bertha. The only observation that could even tacitly allude to the subject was by Mr. Hastings himself, who, by way of informing those who did not know it, said,

“Mr. Mansell comes to-night. He does us a great deal of honour.”

At which, the dinner being ended, he rose, as had been his custom since his illness, and, attended by Bertha, retired to his *siesta* in his room.

She soon returned, and the conversation became a little more

lively. I had watched her upon her father's announcing Mansell's visit, and thought I could perceive her colour heightened. She knows the object, thought I.

On her return, Lady Hungerford, looking at Granville, said, "I think we might have excused our Nimrod of a cousin upon this occasion."

"He, however, brings Lucinda with him," observed Bertha, "which will be something;"—at which, I know not why, she reddened still more.

"You always were fond of Lucinda," said Lady Hungerford, trying to talk.

"I like her spirits when my own are down," replied Bertha. "It would not be amiss, I think, if she were here now, for we seem any thing but preparing for a wedding."

"Do you think that is always so sprightly?" asked Granville. "If your own were approaching, would you be grave or gay?"

At the words "your own approaching," I thought she looked a little conscious, nay gave a slight start, and I own this puzzled me.

"You have no right to ask such questions of young ladies," said Lady Hungerford.

"Besides," added Bertha, "he knows that I will never leave papa, and am therefore married already."

"Aye, but you have not vowed it upon the altar," said Granville, "and without that, the marriage is void."

"But I have vowed it in my own heart," answered Bertha, "and that is the same thing."

This alarmed me.

"By no means," pursued Granville; "at least I hope not; for I once, because I was a younger brother, made a vow of celibacy myself, yet was most ambitious to break it from the moment I saw this lady: I do hope I am not foresworn. Speak to it, Clifford; you are a scholar, and an Oxford casuist. Relieve my anxiety; for the alternative is too horrible."

"I have no doubt," said I, "you could never persuade yourself to break your vow. What would you give me, therefore, if I could bring you off?"

"All I am worth in the world, and ten times more—when I can get it."

"I hope Mr. Clifford will succeed," said Lady Hungerford; "for I am a little alarmed at perjury, and knew nothing of this vow."

"Well, then," observed I, "let me remind you of the gallant Lord Longueville, of the studious but too amorous Count of Navarre. He foreswore the company of women, for the sake of study, for three years; but forsook his books for a mistress in three days.

When reproached for his broken vow—you remember his reply?"

"No."

"Then when you have got it by heart, do not forget to repeat it with all Lord Longueville's fervour to the 'empress of his love'—

'Did not the heavenly rhetorick of thine eye,
(*'Gainst whom the world cannot hold argument*),
Persuade my heart to this false perjury?'

You see it was her ladyship's fault, not yours."

"That is making me an accomplice," said Lady Hungerford, "and I do not accept the excuse."

"Aye; but mind how he goes on," added I:—

"'Vows for thee broke deserve not punishment;
A *woman* I foreswore; but I will prove,
Thou being a *goddess*, I foreswore not thee.'"

"Thank you; thank you a thousand times!" cried Granville, rapping the table. "My conscience is relieved, and I will not send back the licence, as I was thinking of doing. Confess, Honora, that yours is relieved too—

'Thou being a goddess, I foreswore not thee.'"

"Upon my word," observed the lady, "I never knew a better get-off."

"Mr. De Clifford always had the art of bringing Shakspeare beautifully to his aid," said Bertha. "It is not the first time I have heard him do so."

These words were music to me, for I thought of the York brook.

"As we are both so obliged to him," added Lady Hungerford, "being both so scrupulous in conscience, we ought both to reward him; though, for my own part, I know not how."

"Nor I," said Granville, "except by wishing, if he too has made a vow of celibacy, he may have just the same reason for breaking it as I have."

Here Lady Hungerford rewarded him with a look worth a diadem.

"I have made no vow of celibacy," said I; "but whether I have or not, the consequences will, I fear, be the same."

"I see not why," observed Lady Hungerford.

"The road to heaven is difficult," I answered; "yet no other will I, or can I, take. I must therefore for ever stand still."

Here a long pause ensued, and there seemed a consciousness upon us all; but though I watched Bertha, I could make no discovery.

A reserve, which I heard had lately become habitual, since her father's illness, or rather since her brother's death, was in no point relaxed; and whether I had made any way with her or not, it was quite beyond me to decide. I was therefore not sorry when she made the signal for retiring; though I could not make out a reason for a more formal curtesy than usual, as she passed me to quit the room.

I observed this to Granville when we were alone, and asked him if he knew the reason, or whether Mr. Hastings had apprized her of Mansell's intentions.

"Poor girl," said he, "she has certainly been much harassed—what with her fears for her father, what with the prince, and what with you."

"With me!" cried I; "how can any thing connected with me have affected her?"

"You forget the danger you underwent for her sake," said Granville, "and the effect such gallantry must always have upon a young girl, even if she were not one of the most grateful and sensitive of her sex. When the news came, she was absolutely shattered with it; and she has since confessed to Lady Hungerford, that she has been doubly smitten in conscience ever since, for what she now thinks the unkindness of her conduct to you when you left her, as you both thought for ever, two or three years ago. She has also reproached herself with not having been able to thank you as she ought. Hence, no doubt, she cannot treat you with that perfect exemption from constraint which she otherwise might shew. I do not, however, bid you augur any thing from this, particularly favourable to your views. She is perhaps afraid of you, after all that has passed; and we are often afraid of people whom either we think we have used ill, or to whom we feel too much obliged. Mansell's arrival will certainly not add to her freedom of manner with you or anybody else. In short, you must rest upon your oars, and watch the chapter of accidents."

"This cub of a cousin's visit," said I, musing upon this speech of Granville's, "is unlucky; for I have but a week, in which there will be much to do for us all. Pray heaven Mr. Hastings may not be overset with it."

"He is a good deal already," replied Granville. "The letter of his illustrious nephew has had the effect I predicted. His offer, to use his words, to take Bertha without a fortune, in consideration of his losses——"

"The only redeeming feature I know of in him," said I, "had it not been so vulgarly expressed."

"So I think," observed Granville; "but so does not think Mr. Hastings, who considers it as a bitter affront, which would induce

him, he says, to forbid his visit at once, but that he thinks himself bound to lay his pretensions before her who alone is to judge of them. 'Here, however,' said the lofty old gentleman, 'I feel safe. Bertha will not degrade herself in degrading *me*.' At the same time," added Granville, "he is embarrassed by Mansell being accompanied by his sister, whom Bertha is, with reason, fond of, and who has no doubt undertaken to be her brother's advocate with her. Altogether," concluded Granville, "it is most provokingly untoward, both to Lady Hungerford and me."

"To say nothing of your humble servant," said I; and we rose from table.

Every thing about the house now assumed a sort of mysterious air; everybody was occupied, and yet, seemingly, nothing visible. Mr. Hastings was closeted with his daughter; Granville, with Lady Hungerford; the servants, with those of Mansell and his sister, who had preceded them, and were settling their rooms.

This lasted some time. I felt deserted, and in the way; and to relieve my own abstraction, as well as enjoy the fresh air of the evening, I sallied by myself, as I did once before, into the well-known flower-garden. Here I would have avoided the summer-house, for which I had imbibed an unaccountable terror, but seeing a female descending the steps, from the alcove, I, with some little emotion, imagining it might be Bertha, turned towards it, but found it was my friend Mrs. Margaret. She had gone there, she said, for her mistress's pretty bonnet, which had lain there forgotten for two days, and would be quite spoiled by the damp at night.

"But," added she, depositing the bonnet on a garden bench, "I really don't know what's come to dear Miss Bertha about her things, which she minds no more now, than if they just cost nothing at all. Indeed, she seem never to know where she leave them, and be quite changed as to that; for formerly she were, perhaps, too particular, and would almost scold me, if she *could* scold anybody (bless her, dear young lady!), if I happened to forget them. But that prince—his highness—have, I think; turned us all quite beside ourselves; and then Mr. Granville, and her ladyship; and poor, dear master, not yet recovered; and all I don't know what beside, have quite put her out—turned her and me too, I may say, topsyturvy. Ah! Sir, things were not so once; before young Master Charles met his death so sorrowful; but we are glad you so nobly revenged him on that lord, as, to be sure, you felt justified for it; and yet that lord, too, wanted to marry Miss Bertha. Dear me, how she is beset, and she can fancy nobody; and now they do say—but I suppose, Sir, you know; you have heard——"

I had not been acquainted with Mrs. Margaret so long, as not to know that to stop her when once set a-going was as impossible as to

do so by an alarum clock, and that the only way was, as with that, to let her run down of herself. I, however, did not reflect, that by putting a question I should wind her up again, or perhaps I should not have said, in answer to her long address,

“Indeed, my good Margaret, I know nothing, and have heard nothing; what do you mean?”

“Dear me,” returned she, “and you can’t guess about Mr. Mansell—another cousin? Sure love for her runs in the family; for if it had not been for her ladyship, I always used to think Mr. Granville would have offered, and she always used to favour him more than anybody else, except, indeed, when she was a little girl, when you first came here, and then I thought she liked you best; but them days be all gone, and the thing is, what we are to expect now; for Mrs. Dickens, Miss Lucinda’s maid, who you must know is my sister, says, there will be a great to-do at this visit, for that it was no secret at Buntercomb Hall (that is, Squire Mansell’s) that the squire meant to marry his cousin; that is, if she would marry him; of which Dickens, and Mr. Sidebottom, his valet, to whom he told it, says, there can be no doubt, as the squire be so rich, and us not half so rich as we were. But, thank God! there is still enough; and I said, says I, to my sister Dickens, ‘Don’t you be too sure of that; for my Miss Bertha, was she starving—which she ain’t—won’t marry no one that she don’t like, and depend upon it all this fuss will come to nothing.’ But then the wonder is, who she *will* marry, for I suppose she must marry somebody. There was first, Sir Harry; and then my lord marquess (him as you shot); and then the prince (and I own I did not think that would be); and now Mr. Mansell. What will come of it, God only knows.”

Seeing she had now run herself down again, I was afraid of asking another question, so observed,

“Perhaps it is not necessary that any thing should come of it, especially as Miss Hastings is so devoted to her father.”

This, I thought, would close the conversation; but she would not be so let off, for she immediately rejoined,

“That is very true; but then, Lord bless me, Mr. Hastings, poor, dear gentleman, is far from well, and, at any rate, can’t live for ever, and then who will she have to comfort and protect her, dear young lady?”

To this I did not think proper to answer, and was moving away, when she fixed me, spite of myself, by saying at once—

“Now, I have a fancy in my head, that would be best of all; and that is, that, as you are now such a grand gentleman, and certainly cannot deny all that you said when you were deleerous, the very best thing that could happen would be for you and my young lady to make up a match together; and that’s what poor Madame Porte,

the governess that's gone, used to say—though to be sure it was only in joke—when you used to dance together, and Madame used to call you charming *enfant*, which they say means an infant, though you were then near as high as you are now, and no more an infant than I am.”

Here the good Margaret was completely done; and, as I felt more and more the impropriety of this sort of conference, I put an end to it at last by saying,

“My good friend, thanking you for all your good news and your good wishes, I do not think Miss Hastings would be pleased with you for talking thus; besides, the dews are beginning to rise, and that pretty bonnet you were so anxious to rescue from the damp of the summer-house seems likely to be absolutely drowned in its present place of safety.”

This appeal to her, in her capacity of mistress of the robes, did more to stop her than that to her discretion, and snatching up the bonnet, which she said she was afraid would require new ribbons, she allowed herself to retire from the gossip she so dearly loved.

For my part, though she had told me nothing new, I could not help revolving what she said of the situation of Bertha, evidently any thing but tranquil; nor did I fail to fasten upon the hints, trifling as they were, which shewed that this sagacious *soubrette* had certainly, for some reason in her own mind, entertained a notion which it made my heart dance to think of; and I began to lean seriously to an opinion, that an old waiting-gentlewoman, who had been about her mistress from a child, had full as good a chance of knowing that mistress's inclinations as a friend of her own rank. To be sure, however, I could detect nothing but her own good wishes for me in this instance, and for those I was thankful.

But the noise of wheels, and the trampling of horses rattling through the park, put an end to these speculations and my solitude at the same time, and drove me to the house to observe the arrival of the aspiring Mansell and his sister at the hall. His valet and her *femme de chambre* had already introduced themselves in one carriage, and now his barouche and four, with two outriders, one preceding and one following, thundered for admittance.

It was dusk, and seemingly a hundred lights illuminated the windows to do the new suitor honour. For though his letters to Granville and his uncle were not six hours old, yet the harbingers who had brought them had had too much of the spirit of their vocation not to let out their suspicions, which suspicions, turned into certainties, were now known to every servant of the house. Hence all had been for some time on the watch, and were now advanced to do honour to this squire of high degree, who, on the

strength of his eight thousand a-year, came, like Jupiter in a shower of gold, to take possession of his Danaë.

For my part, I had no feeling but of great curiosity. As to any fear of his success, I was perfectly tranquil. How different from my feelings when the mere sight of Prince Adolphus on the road filled me with terror!

Granville did the honours of the reception, for Mr. Hastings pleaded his weak state, and Bertha had shut herself up in her chamber. Lady Hungerford was not called upon, and was particularly disinclined to appear; and myself had too little hope to please or be pleased, and indeed, was too little entitled to seem one of the family, to present myself. I remained therefore, in the music-room, whence I heard the rough abrupt voice, which I had always so disliked, introducing the owner with—

“Granville, my hearty, how are you? How is uncle? how is cousin Bertha? Where are they all? Why one would suppose they did not care for one, any more than you, who did not invite me to your wedding; but you see I am come for all that. By the way, how is my lady? Here, I suppose?”

This volubility could by no means be stopped, and like Mrs. Margaret's, could only be allowed to go down of itself; for, while going, not all the attempts of Miss Mansell could succeed in obtaining an answer to inquiries, in a very different tone, after her uncle and Bertha.

They were both in deep mourning for their father, though the squire's countenance did not exhibit that of a mourner; and entering the music-room and seeing me, he started as if he had trod on a serpent. However, he put his hand to his hat, which he had not yet taken off, saying,

“Ha! I believe I know you; I met you at York, didn't I? A friend of Granville, who shot Albany for killing poor Charles. All obliged to you for it, no doubt.”

Here Miss Mansell interposed, and with some displeasure, said, “Brother, this is not the way to speak to Mr. De Clifford, to whom we are all under obligations. I have the pleasure of knowing him too; I trust he has not forgotten us.”

I recognised this speech with the politeness it deserved, and the bustle being a little over, Margaret brought down a request from her mistress that Miss Mansell would go up to her.

Granville proposed to her brother to accompany him to his chamber, which was accepted, and I was again left alone.

My situation was certainly a peculiar one. A comparative stranger, or at least totally unconnected with a family, far removed from the obscurity of mine, with whom it never had had intercourse, yet forming, as it were, a part of it, from being its only favoured guest

on an occasion so solemn, that few besides near relations are ever invited; moreover, destined to be on the spot in one of the most trying scenes of domestic history, an offer of alliance with the heiress of the family, calling forth all that could interest its feelings or prospects:—for me, almost a wanderer, little better than an adventurer, though a successful one, to be in this situation, moved my astonishment, and I felt as if I was in a dream. I at least felt that I was not in my place, and had no business here; and though the furniture of the room recalled, as it always did, very intense impressions of such early times, that it told me I was not the stranger I thought myself, still I could not shake off the uncomfortable lowness and want of support that suddenly came over me. The whole house seemed occupied, full of interests which did not in their opinion concern me; of me all were independent; Mr. Hastings absorbed in family views, Bertha in most exciting communication with Lucinda, Mansell with Granville, Lady Hungerford engrossed with her own impending crisis, certainly any thing but in connection with me; even the servants taken up with one another, regardless of the solitary guest in the music-room, and perhaps wondering what business he had there.

All this had an indescribable effect upon me, and I almost wished myself away. Nor was I at all consoled when the butler came in to say that the ladies not being able to attend the tea-table, Mr. Hastings feeling ill, and the other gentlemen very busy, Mrs. Margaret would, if I pleased, make tea for me in her room, and he would bring it without delay.

The tea I declined; but it is extraordinary how this little demonstration of what I thought abandonment, in my then state of mind, affected me. I never felt so forlorn. How unequally do we appear framed for the exigencies of our nature, according to the state of our nerves or temper, when they overtake us. When I went out to meet Lord Albany, I thought it was to certain death; yet I went with a sort of triumph; here, because half-a-dozen persons were too much occupied with their own interests to attend to mine, and I was left alone for half an hour, I felt abandoned by the world.

An end, however, was at last put to my solitude, and my uneasiness with it, by the approach of Granville and Mansell, who, as usual, notminding who heard him, and talking loud as he crossed the hall, observed, in any thing but a whisper,

“It does not signify; faint heart never won fair lady, or, as we used to say in the grammar, *fortuna favet fortibus*,” and with this they entered the room.

Here the squire lamented that he had come an hour too late; “for I wanted you,” said he to Granville, “to see my new set of bays. Four such prime ones were never seen on York course,

and so Lord Greenturf was forced to say, though he looked blue with jealousy. Cost a hundred-and-twenty a-piece, as well as the two grooms' nags, who match exactly, so that at any time I can start six; and when you come to Buntercomb, I will shew you such stables; I pulled down the old ones the moment the old gentleman died. It was provoking that you and Bertha did not see the cattle when we drove up; I thought she might be at the window, but the days do shorten confoundedly in August. By the bye, what sort of a smith have you got here, for I am sorry to say a shoe of one of the leaders is loose?"

In this way went on this accomplished ornament of the West Riding, and I only heartily wished that the object of his aspirations had heard every word he uttered. Was I too vain in thinking that, though I could not descant so glibly on coach horses, I might enter the lists with him in any thing else?

As the travellers had had no dinner, an early supper was ordered to be prepared for them; and as Bertha was still engaged with Miss Mansell, the squire said he would go and inspect his cattle's berths in the stables, an evening ceremony which he always performed himself, and one of the most rational he did perform.

While gone, Granville informed me that the critical communication had been made to Bertha, not only by her father, who had added not a word on the subject, leaving her to be sole judge of it, but by Mansell's letter, which he had insisted upon Granville's presenting. And as I was afterwards fortunate enough to see this precious epistle, perhaps, while fresh with the subject, it may not be inopportune to set it forth here.

DEAR AND CHARMING COUSIN,

"I have always so much admired you, that you have made me do what I did not think of doing, for four or five years at least—that is, resolve to marry; and I trust this will plead something in my favour, for a young heir, just come into eight thousand a-year (any part of which you please shall be settled upon you), might perhaps look to a few years' liberty, before he tied himself up. But I consulted Lucinda upon it, and she advised it, and moreover, it was some of her books that made me resolve upon it; for she lent me 'Sir Charles Grandison' to read, which, though rather long, by skipping Clementina, and reading nothing but about Harriet, I got through it in about two months. You must know, I thought you very much like Harriet, particularly when you blushed, which she was always doing, till she got married, which is the way I believe of young ladies. I thought too I was in some things like Sir Charles—that is, he seems always to have had a handsome chariot and six,

and always two, if not three, outriders ; but he did not hunt with old Selby, which I should have done, and he certainly fenced better than I can, and loved it more, but that's all out now.

“ Well, reading this book made me feel queer about you, and though Lucinda did not seem to think I should succeed (I am sure I don't know why, for I don't think you will get a better match), she said she would not oppose my going over to Foljambe to make the offer, saying I could be but refused, which was very friendly of her. What was more, she said she would go with me ; so between us both, and particularly as your fortune is so hurt, I hope you will accept me for better for worse.

“ If you do, as Granville is to be married in a week, and one trouble will serve, I think we had better all be joined together at the same time. Be assured I will make you a better husband than any of those lords you have refused ; and so believe me, dear Bertha,

“ Your affectionate cousin,

MARTIN MANSELL.

“ *Buntercomb Hall,*

Aug. 4, 178—.

“ N.B. I have told your father I want nothing down ; but I suppose he will settle the Foljambe property on us and our children.”

It may be supposed how likely such a letter was to make a favourable impression on such a being as she to whom it was addressed. But for Lucinda's visit, she would have entreated her father to dismiss him the house ; and Lucinda herself, who had not seen the letter, but to whom it was shewn by Bertha, gave the thing up.

That lady had never been sanguine as to her brother's success ; but being sincerely fond of her cousin, so as ardently to desire the closer alliance, could it be effected, and thinking really there were some good points in her brother, which, if his coarseness could be put up with, might redeem him, she had hoped, though faintly, that she might do his suit some service by accompanying him on his visit. But this letter closed all the hope she had entertained, and she had nothing to reply to the instant and decided rejection of Bertha, founded upon such a total dissimilarity of character.

Her only remaining endeavour, therefore, was to stand between her brother and his uncle's indignation, which was disposed to shew itself in no measured terms ; in which, with some difficulty, owing to Mr. Hastings' great respect for her, she succeeded.

For appearance' sake, she made suit to Granville to ask permis-

sion of Lady Hungerford for herself and Mansell to attend their nuptials ; which, as her prudence suggested, being no more than a natural proceeding, would cover his failure and let him down softly.

But, whatever Mansell's good points, his prominent feature being a churlish vanity, exalted to its height by his accession to fortune, he would not admit, any more than he could understand, the lenitives his sister proposed. Resolving, therefore, to quarrel outright with his relations for what he called their ill usage of him, he thought it a noble revenge to quit the house in open anger, and thus proclaim his want of success to the world at large.

He therefore gave orders for an immediate departure, which he was only prevented from carrying into effect that very night by the influence of his more sober-minded sister.

This, however, occasioned horror and disappointment to Mrs. Dickens, and her colleague, Mr. Sidebottom, who had comforted themselves with the prospect of a long and jolly sojourn at the park, in all the enjoyment of bridal importance, and lamented the vexation and trouble of repacking the trunks almost in the moment they had finished the pleasanter task of emptying them. The confusion of the whole house may be imagined ; the supper was altogether disdained by the high-minded squire, who ordered Sidebottom to attend him with brandy and water in his own room where he opened his griefs to him, as, for want of a better confidant, he generally did.

His sister remained half the night with Bertha ; Lady Hungerford, much discomposed, sought her own apartment ; Granville was occupied with softening his uncle ; and I, again finding myself *de trop*, began a second time to wish myself away.

The next morning the sun shone bright. The four bays, of a hundred-and-twenty pounds a-piece, were at the door at six, and looked so bright and pawed the ground so proudly, that the squire's pride was somewhat revived, and the ferocity with which he leapt into the barouche softened on going off in such beautiful style. The place, however, he swore never to see again ; and so ended this new alarm, and the amatory expedition of the squire of Buntercomb Hall to Foljambe Park.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

MY CONSCIENCE ACCUSES ME TO BERTHA AND HER FATHER.—RAILLERY AND
BEAUTIFUL TENDERNESS SHEWN BY LADY HUNGERFORD.

I have heard
That guilty creatures at a play,
Have, by the very cunning of the scene,
Been struck so to the soul, that presently
They have proclaimed their malefactions.

SHAKSPEARE.—*Hamlet*.

THE peace of the family was now resumed. Mr. Hastings and his daughter felt relieved from a severe invasion of their quiet; and Lady Hungerford and her betrothed were left to the delights of privacy in their most interesting of all situations, more and more exciting as the day of their nuptials approached. They were so wrapt up in one another, that they seldom appeared to the family, except at meals: and as Mr. Hastings' invalid state kept him frequently from being visible, it was scarcely possible for Bertha and myself, spite of the precautions she thought herself bound to adopt to avoid it, not to be thrown sometimes together.

Yet, she avoided it even with ingenuity; for if she could not refuse to Granville and Lady Hungerford the pleasure of walking together alone, and she either retired to the summer-house herself, or sought an airing in the park, on one pretence or other she always took Margaret with her as an attendant, and, in the house, she was always in her own, or her father's apartment.

In the latter only was I allowed the delight of her society, and to listen to the charm of her conversation, which flowed in the easy accents of a pure and natural mind, so as only to render her beauty still more fascinating.

Women, indeed, they say, have a natural eloquence; but I cannot describe how winningly Bertha's seemed a part of her very nature; so that, added to the expression of her features while conversing, she seemed to have sat for a picture I always thought too lovely to be real, till I saw and heard her.

“Her voice had magic sweetness in its sound;
Her modest eyes appeared afraid to wound;
And yet so cheerful was her artless guise,
Gay could she look, and then had laughing eyes;
But when she spoke, such honied words she'd find,
As all unweeting stole away the mind.”

Of this I was made more than ever sensible when admitted to form one of a party with herself and father, and the time so passed seemed moments of sunshine, in which I absolutely basked; for here, free from all constraint, she indulged in the expression of thoughts which denoted a justness of understanding, as well as a sensibility of feeling, which, like the song of the Sirens,

“Took the prison’d soul,
And lapt it in elysium.”

Many of these thoughts arose spontaneously in her own breast, but many more from the cultivation of those elegant studies, for which the retirement hitherto of her life, and her constant intercourse with her refined friend, had afforded so many opportunities. What struck me was, that although her reading was various, in various languages, and her memory retentive, she knew no trash, but had confined herself to masters alone. Hence very modern authors had little share of her acquaintance. I speak, however, as I once spoke before, of above half a century ago, when Hayley and Della Crusca were the leaders in fashionable literature.

On these occasions her father was a delighted listener as well as myself. Indeed it had been long her amiable province to soothe his couch by reading to him from her favourite authors, many of which, when I first was admitted to this most rational, as well as most engaging occupation, lay upon the table, either not yet removed, though finished, or waiting in their order to be read.

Among these, the morning after the retreat of the squire, I found a volume of Otway had been selected by Mr. Hastings himself, for the sake of recalling to his memory the touching acting of Mrs. Barry in *Belvidera*. I, who had just witnessed the witchery of Mrs. Siddons in the same character (then in her early days), was pleased to find it was appointed for that morning’s reading, and forestalled the happiness of hearing it from the lips of Bertha. But she disappointed me, partly because she had not studied the play (for she generally studied beforehand whatever she read to her father), chiefly from modesty, her own pure attribute, which forbade her, she said, from attempting such a display.

“And so,” said Mr. Hastings, “though I have two young people who can read, I am to lose my play, because each, I suppose, is afraid of the other.”

“Mr. De Clifford,” observed Bertha, “has shewn no fear; and as he has so lately seen what is said to be the perfection of acting in this very play, he has the less excuse if he refuse to please *you*, and instruct *me*, by being so good as to read it.”

Thus called upon, though I really felt a sort of nervousness

on account of my audience, I could not decline, and took up the book.

I have been thus particular, only to introduce the strange and unforeseen feeling which some of the scenes occasioned in my own mind ; and, as I could not help thinking, in Bertha too, if I might not also add Mr. Hastings himself.

Here was what Fothergill would call a *mésalliance*, against the consent of the father of the lady. That father, too, had, before it happened, covered the bridegroom with favour and protection. No very great difference, thought I, from my own case. His indignation and resentment were proportionably severe, even to cruelty, in the total abandonment of his daughter to ruin and degradation. His curses were shocking, and the agonizing misery of the tragedy all arises from this forbidden marriage.

I own, as I advanced, my senses were sadly diverted to my own case, at least as I had sometimes fancied it, could I have succeeded in my wishes for Bertha ; nor was I unmindful of the feelings and character of Jaffier (who, I could not help thinking, would then have been the Clifford of the play), as they unfolded themselves in the strong language of the poet. Thus, in the very opening, I thought I heard Mr. Hastings instead of Priuli, when he exclaims,

“ No more ! I’ll hear no more ; begone and leave me.”

Of course, I applied the answer of Jaffier to myself.

“ Not hear me ! by my suffering but you shall.

My lord, my lord ! I’m not that abject wretch

You think me. Patience ! where’s the distance throws

Me back so far, but I may boldly speak,

In right, though proud oppression will not hear me ?”

So far so good, for Jaffier ; but then the answer hit hard.

“ Have you not wrong’d me in the nicest point,
The honour of my house ?”

This cut pretty deeply ; but mark how it went on—

“ When you first came home

From travel, with such hopes as made you looked on

By all men’s eyes ; a youth of expectation ;

Pleased with your growing virtue, I received you,

Courted, and sought to raise you to your merits ;

My house, my table, nay my fortune too,

My very self was your’s ; you might have used me

To your best service. Like an open friend

I treated, trusted you, and thought you mine,

When, in requital of my best endeavours,

You treacherously practised to undo me,

Seduced the weakness of my age's darling,
My only child, and stole her from my bosom."

This touching speech, touching spite of the cruel sternness that afterwards so bitterly revenged the father on his child, whether from its own intrinsic pathos, or the application I made of it to what *might* have been my own case, affected me so much that I faltered, and for a moment could not get on; and whether the sympathy which this occasioned, or the unhappiness thus wrung from the injured Priuli, produced the effect, the eyes of both father and daughter seemed ready to run over.

"You read too feelingly," said Mr. Hastings. "I am afraid this won't do for an old man like me. However, my little Bertha there will never turn Belvidera, so I will not fear being Priuli."

"Mr. De Clifford does indeed read these terrible reproaches feelingly, and would almost make us hate Jaffier," observed Bertha, while her countenance shewed a thousand emotions, which she vainly attempted to hide. "I know not," continued she, "what is to come of this play, if the interest begins so early to be so powerful. But pray go on."

I obeyed, with the account which Jaffier gives of the cause of Belvidera's affection for him, his having saved her life—

"For from that hour she loved me,
And for her life she paid me with herself."

"A payment perhaps," observed Mr. Hastings, "not undeserved, had she only done the common justice due to a father who doated upon her, by asking his consent. What says my dear Bertha?"

"That, with all her tenderness for her husband, I will never be Belvidera," replied Bertha. "But again, pray go on."

I did so, but had not much pleasure in the next speech, which did not raise Jaffier in our opinions, though it made us shudder at the dreadful imprecations of Priuli—

"You stole her from me; like a thief you stole her;
At dead of night: that cursed hour you chose,
To rifle me of all my heart held dear.
May all your joys in her prove false like mine!
A sterile fortune and a barren bed
Attend you both; continual discord make
Your days and nights bitter and grievous; still
May the hard hand of a vexatious need
Oppress and grind you, till at last you find
The curse of disobedience all your portion."

"This is too horrible," said Bertha; "and I really did not think, Mr. De Clifford, you could read so stern a part so sternly. Wrong

as she was, poor Belvidera was here too much punished. What says papa?"

"I know not, dear," answered Mr. Hastings; "for, thanks to Heaven and you, I know not what it is to have a disobedient daughter."

At this he smiled more sweetly than I thought he *could* smile, and that smile irradiated the whole countenance of his daughter with a joy that made her look like an angel.

The horrors, however, went on, and both father and daughter shuddered when Priuli, being told of his grandchild, wishes him to live, to "bait them for his bread, and din their ears with hungry cries"—

"Whilst his unhappy mother
Sits down and weeps in bitterness of want."

The unrelenting, fiendish old man, when Jaffier wishes himself in his grave, adds,

"And she too with thee;
For, living here, you're but my curs'd remembrancers."

At this Bertha seemed struck with terror, and even Mr. Hastings in a voice of agony exclaimed, "This is too much!"

Some pity now, however, arose for Jaffier, when he said, with something like dignity—

"You use me thus because you know my soul
Is fond of Belvidera. You perceive
My life *feeds* on her; therefore thus you treat me."

Here Bertha became more than ever attentive, particularly where Jaffier asks, if he were a thief, what should hinder him to send her back with contumely,

"And court his fortune where she would be kinder?"

But when Priuli says, "he *dare* not do it," her whole heart seemed melted by the simple words of the reply—

"Indeed, my lord, I dare not;
My heart that awes me is too much my master."

My own feelings indeed responded to this, when, as I could not help, I made the case my own, and thought the question was of Bertha instead of Belvidera.

These applications made the play too powerful for me, even before the appearance of Belvidera. But when, in the close of the first act, her conjugal tenderness is so feelingly described, and Jaffier,

in his gratitude, bursts into that ebullition of admiration for the sex, elicited by his love for his wife, which had charmed me so often, it was not easy for me to be so close to the exemplification of its justice, and proceed with calmness. In fact, I looked at Bertha more than at the book, when I repeated rather than read—

“ Oh ! woman ! lovely woman ! Nature made thee
To temper man : we had been brutes without you :
Angels are painted fair to look like you :
There’s in you all that we believe of heaven,
Amazing brightness, purity and truth,
Eternal joy and everlasting love.”

This glowing picture of all that I had so long loved, while the object of it was seated so close to me, and in every turn of her countenance shewed its fidelity, so overpowered me, that, no longer master of myself, the book fell from my hands, and little was wanting to shew what was passing within me.

“ It is nothing,” said I, seeing my friends under some anxiety, thinking I was ill. “ A little air will cure all this.”

And Bertha anticipated me in opening the door into the garden. I returned to the book, and would have resumed it ; but both father and daughter protested against it, and Mr. Hastings proposed that Bertha should go on with the play.

“ That would disgrace me,” said I.

“ I am sure it would *me*,” observed Bertha. “ I never knew what it was that gave Otway the character of pathetic before. No ; I will never pretend to read him aloud.”

At this moment the butler announced it was twelve o’clock, and that the pony-chair was ready.

“ I am glad of it,” said Bertha ; “ for the mere opening of this sad tale has overset me.”

“ Well,” said I, “ pray don’t overset the pony-chair.”

Which Mr. Hastings declared was a *bon mot*, and as Sterne said a *bon mot* was always worth a pinch of snuff, he offered me his box.

Left to myself in the library, I more than ever revolved my situation, and found it only the more dangerous, from the very circumstances which I had courted at a distance with so much ardour ; I mean the disappearance of all uncertainty as to Bertha’s engagement, and the wonderful changes in my own fortune. Had these difficulties continued, all that would have been left me would have been to have submitted to my fate as a matter of necessity, which, in time, I might have accomplished. But these being done away, and the ground left fairly open, my hopes were no longer occupied with any thing extraneous, or beyond my control, but were all

centred in the one powerful question, dependant upon my own merits and pretensions, the decision of which could not now be far off.

This was the fearful point at which I had arrived. In this agitated state I had continued a full hour; when, by way of diversion of thought, I took down from the bookshelves, not a sermon, or Seneca's *Morals*, which courted my first notice, but a volume of Sir Charles Sedley's amatory poems; and in conning these over I was surprised by Lady Hungerford, who had returned from her ride, during which she had fallen in with Mr. Hastings and Bertha.

My surprise may be imagined, when, rather abruptly (perhaps, for her, indiscreetly), she accosted me with—

“Well, Mr. De Clifford, I find you have this morning gained Bertha's heart.”

I started at the words, looked pale and red, and began to stammer out my wonder, when she cooled all by saying,

“There I have done wrong; I never considered how little you sanguine people can bear to be metaphorically treated, and how matter-of-fact every thing ought to be that alludes to your feelings. Know then, that by gaining the lady's heart, I meant nothing but her praise (and give me leave to tell you, that is no light thing), for the manner in which you read Otway this morning.”

“And did she not add, how like a simpleton I behaved—that a green school-girl could not have done worse?”

“She said you frightened her by being taken ill, but I heard nothing of being a simpleton.”

On this I could not help recounting to my kind protectress all that had oppressed my fancy, in regard to my own case, as the play proceeded, till at last it overcame me—when she observed,

“This will never do. Why, in nerves, cousin Mansell would beat you hollow; and, had he chosen to stay, with such inconvenient feelings as yours, might have proved a powerful rival.”

“And would you have me discard those feelings?”

“Not exactly; but I would not have them prevent action at a crisis where action is necessary. Though you are in love with Miss Hastings, I suppose, you do not expect Miss Hastings to be in love with you, without knowing any thing about the matter; or that she should throw herself at your feet, when you ought to be at hers? I doubt, if she did, if you would love her half so well. Consider, she is one of those

‘Who would be woo'd, and not unsought be won.’”

“O!” returned I, “play not with my feelings. If I thought that seeking her would find her—find her what I wish—how could I ever cease the pursuit till what I wish was crowned?”

“Bravely spoken,” replied the lady; “but depend upon it, to let fall your book in a tremor, for fear of shadows of your own creating, is not the way to succeed.”

“May I look upon this as encouragement?”

“If by that word you wish to ask if I know any thing of my friend’s heart towards you, in the first place, let me say that if I did I would not tell you; but, in the next, let me say I do not. That she esteems you—thanks you—wishes you happy, as her father does too—and thinks you read *Otway* charmingly—is certain. Beyond this I know nothing.”

“Can you then tell me nothing *favourable* to my hopes?”—
“No.”

“Am I to despair?”—“No.”

“Would you have me to propose this instant?”—“No.”

“Alas! then what am I to do?”—“Go on; but let no more books fall in a fright.”

Thus did this dear lady, I will not say amuse herself by playing with my feelings, but (perhaps without intending it) tantalize me with alternate encouragement and depression, for so I considered this conversation.

She wound it up with a strange ironical request, which her own happy spirits on her approaching nuptials, I suppose, prompted, that I would put into writing, and present to Bertha, a statement of the particular beauty of person or mind for which I so loved her; and, as I seemed so afraid of presenting such a thing myself, she said she would be my ambassadress, and present it for me.

I received this, as it was proposed, jestingly; but having only that moment laid down the poems I had been reading, I took them up again and said,

“Sedley shall answer for me, for I agree with him in every one of these lines, only changing the name of *Chloris* for *Bertha*.

‘Chloris, I cannot say your *eyes*
Did my unwary heart surprise;
Nor will I swear it was your *face*,
Your *shape*, or any nameless *grace*;
For you are so *entirely* fair,
To love a *part*, injustice were.
No drowning man can know which drop
Of water his last breath did stop;
So when the stars in heav’n appear,
And join to make the night look clear;
The light we no *one’s* bounty call,
But the obliging gift of all.

‘He that does lips or hands adore,
Deserves *them* only, and no more;

But I love *all*, and every part,
And nothing less can ease my heart.
Cupid *that* lover weakly strikes,
Who can express what 'tis he likes.' "

"Upon my word," said the lady, "you shew yourself a promising pupil of your master, Granville. I don't think *he* could have answered better. But give me the book, for the lines are very pretty, and I must shew them to him."

At that moment he joined us, but only to take his mistress away with him to billiards. Oh! how I envied him!

How did that envy increase as time advanced, though envy is not the proper name for it, for I seriously rejoiced. His position, however, made my own more restless, and it seemed unreasonable, nay, almost unnatural, that I should not feel the same contentment that he did.

His betrothed looked handsomer every hour, as *the* hour approached; handsomer as her consciousness increased. Yet at one time, instead of being, as she generally was, radiant with smiles, I found her in tears—Granville by her side.

Mr. Hastings and Bertha were taking their morning's drive, and I had settled, by way of a ride, to go to York, though it did not take place. They were in the music-room, thinking they should be alone, when I interrupted them.

I quickly retired, lost in wonder at what could have occasioned the emotions I witnessed. At first I thought they had had a quarrel (such things have happened), and a lovers' quarrel is proverbial. Yet they seemed the tears of extreme tenderness, not of bitterness; and Granville, who told it me, lest I should misconstrue them, said they were really so.

In fact, as the day approached when this charming woman was to give herself up to another, the remembrance of her first lord occupied her mind almost to absorption. He had always loved her so devotedly, and with such perfection of esteem, that she had begun to tremble with fear that the step she was about to take might be deemed ungrateful to his memory. Granville's tender attentions, too, increasing as the day of his happiness drew nigh, her fears and conscious associations also augmented; and though far from repenting, still farther from retracting, the recollection of the tenderness of him who first possessed her love, mixed something like compunctious doubts as to the strict propriety of her present conduct, with the softness of her remembrance of the past.

This she ingenuously owned to Granville, together with all she had felt of former happiness with Lord Hungerford.

"Yes," said she, "though greatly older than myself, I loved him, not only with all the devotion of the respect he commanded

from every one, but even with all the fondness he could himself desire. His mind and his heart were both young, and his inestimable worth heightened my feelings into real passion. You must not expect more, therefore, from me than I gave to him. Though the eight years that have passed since he was lost to me have allayed the poignancy of grief, and though I have admitted you to my heart, it is impossible that I can displace him from it, or cease to love his memory. If I thought, therefore, he could now look down upon me with displeasure, for being able to love you, the heart I give you would be a desolate one."

"Here," said Granville, "she was so overcome as to produce those emotions in which you surprised us. Truth is, we neither of us had ever thought of discussing the question of second marriages; I, from being too happy to make any question about it; she, from the perpetual example of the world, till awakened by the near approach of the ceremony, and its association with his memory, who had so entirely possessed her esteem and affection. For my own part," concluded Granville, "I only honoured her, nay, loved her more and more for it; and when she uttered something like an excuse, and a hope that this overtake would not hurt me, I told her with a full heart that she only raised herself higher than ever with me, as it did myself in my own mind, for having been able to win the affection of so sweet a character. With this she was satisfied, and we are better friends than ever."

I was quite penetrated by this account, and regarded Lady Hungerford with even more than usual admiration. That one so superior to almost all her sex in every thing that the world deemed desirable—brilliant, elegant, full of rich talent, and with almost a masculine understanding, formed for public display—should in reality possess also the soft and feminine graces that so charm us in private life, moved my wonder, and more than ever excited my attachment. I could only more than ever congratulate my friend on his good fortune.

Nothing remarkable passed during the rest of the day, except the finishing of *Venice Preserved*, which, though moving both for horrors and for tenderness, yet as they did not draw forth any thing that bore upon my own case, I pass them.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

DISCOURSE WITH BERTHA ON CONJUGAL DUTY.—BEAUTIFUL AND JUST, BUT NOT BLUE.

My noble father!

I do perceive here a divided duty.

SHAKSPEARE.—*Othello*.

ONE only day now remained, before the fates of Granville and that admirable woman, whose winning qualities I have so often described, were to be united. The day was spent in pleasing, yet awful, and in some respects sorrowful, preparation; pleasing and awful to the parties most concerned, who were to leave Foljambe from the church door; sorrowful to those who staid behind.

Granville and Lady Hungerford, as may be supposed, were occupied with one another, at least, as much as their gentleman and lady of the bed-chamber would permit them. These, in arranging matters both for the ceremony and their departure afterwards, seemed by far the principal characters in the drama; but for myself, the chief incident of the morning was another reading in Mr. Hastings' apartments. Here, forgetting my preceding disaster, I was requested again to be the lecturer.

The story of poor Belvidera having been finished, Bertha had selected another, which she said she was particularly fond of, and begged me to recite the struggles of Imogen on parting with her husband Posthumus, banished for having married her.

Here was another clandestine match, as well as *mésalliance*; and though the choice was evidently fortuitous, I could not help wondering at my being fated a second time, and so soon, to plunge into scenes so illustrative of my own particular feelings.

Though the king (Cymbeline) had bred up Posthumus in his court, "made him of his bed-chamber, and "put upon him all the learning of his time," in which Imogen seems to have been his approved companion, no sooner were they married than the king hates his daughter.

I own I felt much, and looked keenly at Mr. Hastings, when in his first speech of reproach, Cymbeline calls her a '*disloyal thing*,' that should repair his youth, but had heaped a year's age upon him.

"It seems to have been his own fault," said Mr. Hastings; "for, from what I know of the play, he countenanced the intimacy between his daughter and Posthumus."

“ You will find that he did so,” said Bertha ; “ and being so accomplished as was her husband, I like her firmness in asserting his superiority to all others, however great.”

Upon this I went on, and read—

“ Thou might'st have had the sole son of my queen.”

“ O! blest that I might not! I chose an eagle,
And did avoid a puttock.”

“ I think,” said Mr. Hastings to Bertha, and handling his snuff-box pretty briskly (as he always did when some stirring thought occurred)—“ I think if you were Imogen I could give a name to that puttock ; but for the eagle I am at a loss.”

Bertha's cheek was instantly suffused with crimson ; and as neither Mansell nor the prince any longer made her uneasy, I could not tell why. She answered her father, however, by playfully saying, that he ought not to be guilty of personal applications, and begged me to go on. I did so with—

“ Thou took'st a beggar ;
Would'st have my throne a seat for laziness.”

“ No ; I rather added a lustre to it.”

“ Sir,

It is *your* fault that I have loved Posthumus,
You bred him as my play-fellow, and he is
A man worth any woman ; over-buys me
Almost the sum he pays.”

Here again Mr. Hastings began to comment :—“ Aye,” said he, “ here was the great mistake. Cymbeline gave his daughter a play-fellow, one whom he himself had done all he could to make amiable, and then hates her for loving him.”

“ I knew, dear Sir,” replied Bertha, “ you would think her excusable for loving him, and I think so too, but not for marrying him without her father's consent.”

“ That is a good creed for all daughters,” observed Mr. Hastings ; “ mind you always act up to it.”

“ I trust I shall, Sir,” answered Bertha ; and from having been easy and almost playful, she became unusually pensive.

I began not to relish the conversation, and went on with the dialogue.

“ What ! art thou mad ? ”

“ Almost, Sir.—Heaven restore me ! Would I were
A neatherd's daughter, and my Leonatus
Our neighbour shepherd's son.”

“ This is downright rebellion,” said Mr. Hastings.

“But it is most pathetic,” observed Bertha, “and tells a thousand affecting things. A princess to be so disinterested, and humble; though to be sure so noble a husband as Leonatus justified her.”

“And yet,” remarked her father, “you would no more, I am sure, bid defiance to your parent, than you would throw away your rank in society for the noblest-minded husband.”

“I am not sure,” replied Bertha, “if you had bred me up with him, and made him my play-fellow, like Posthumus.”

“It would destroy all distinction,” said Mr. Hastings, “and let in the levellers with a vengeance.”

“With submission,” said I, “Shakspeare, by this, did not mean that Imogen, *being a princess*, would have *become* a mere peasant for the sake of living with Posthumus; but that she would prefer to have been *born* in a peasant’s rank, with a husband she loved, to being the daughter of a king with one she detested.”

“I think Mr. De Clifford has well explained,” said Bertha.

“Perhaps he has,” answered Mr. Hastings, “and no doubt you agree in the explanation.”

“That I certainly do,” replied she.

“I cannot blame you,” said her father; “but being not a neatherd’s daughter, but a gentlewoman, I have no fear of any neighbour shepherd’s son.”

The conversation here, I thought, had become too grave, and I did not much like the turn it had taken. I was not ill pleased, therefore, when Mr. Hastings said,

“I do not much admire these *unequal* matches, nor yet more, where the old greybeards of fathers are, as usual, brought in growling at their daughters for making them. Priuli was bad enough, and Cymbeline is worse. Give me something more sunshiny—a scene where the choice and the happiness of the parties are equal and mutual, and not leavened by any querulous, peevish papa.”

“You at least, dear Sir,” said Bertha, “cannot be afraid of such a character; but I own the result of poor Imogen’s marriage is rather too affecting for the day before the bridal morn of our dear friends. There should be none but joyful nuptials in the moment of theirs. Perhaps Mr. De Clifford will find us something more appropriate.”

“With all my heart,” said Mr. Hastings.

I immediately laid the book down, and took up another volume of the bard, in which seeing *The Merchant of Venice*, I was struck with the wish of presenting the beautiful character of Portia to Bertha; not, indeed, as a specimen of her own modest and lovely feminineness, but as an example of the strong sense and decision, mixed with softness, and conjugal attachment, which often distinguishes the sex. Portia, as well as Bertha, had been bound

by a promise to her father regarding her marriage, which, like Bertha, she was prepared to fulfil, though to her own risk. She, too, with all her energy, had notions, the description of which delights the heart, in respect to the relations of a wife to a husband.

With this view I passed cursorily through the previous scenes till I came to Bassanio's arrival at Belmont, and the instant interest kindled by him in the bosom of Portia. Here I watched the mind of Bertha as it was developed in her manner of feeling and judging of the event. Portia is so afraid of losing Bassanio, as she must do if he chooses the wrong casket, that, with a sweet touch of nature, she begs him to delay the ceremony of choosing :—

“ I pray you, tarry ; pause a day or two,
Before you hazard ; for in choosing wrong,
I lose your company ; therefore forbear a-while ;
There's something tells me—(*but it is not love*)—
I would not lose you ; and you know yourself,
Hate counsels not in such a quality.
But lest you should not understand me well
(*And yet a maiden hath no tongue but thought*),
I would detain you here some month or two,
Before you venture for me.”

“A pretty bold declaration, and honest withal, for a young lady,” observed Mr. Hastings. “What says Bertha?”

“Far too bold,” answered Bertha, “for one who says,

‘A maiden should have no tongue but thought.’”

“I concluded you would say so,” I observed; “for no young English lady would have so produced herself. But you are to recollect she was an Italian who said it, and not only so, but a great heiress, and almost a queen (indeed, represented as a sovereign in the original novel), and called upon to act and decide for herself in a situation of great publicity, as well as difficulty. She might have been even Amazonian, and not thus out of nature; and 'tis therefore that the real sweetness, and even humbleness, which we afterwards see belonging to her, please us so much.”

“Let us have the passages,” said Mr. Hastings; “I know she redeems herself.”

I immediately turned to the delightful, dignified, yet modest account of her feelings to Bassanio, on the occasion of his successful choice :—

“You see me, Lord Bassanio, where I stand,
Such as I am. Though for myself alone,
I would not be ambitious in my wish
To wish myself much better ; yet for you,
I would be trebled twenty times myself ;
A thousand times more fair—ten thousand times

More rich. But the full sum of me
Is an unlessoned girl, unschooled, unpractised ;
Happy in this, she is not yet so old
But she may learn ; and happier in this,
She is not bred so dull but she *can* learn :
Happiest of all is, that her gentle spirit
Commits itself to yours to be directed,
As from her lord, her governor, and king."

Here breaking off, I could not help saying, that whether as to the sentiment, or the interest it created for the speaker, I thought it among the most beautiful things in Shakspeare.

"One feels it in one's very heart," observed Bertha, who during the whole of these interesting lines marked in the various changes of her complexion, and in every turn of her features, the effect they had upon her head and heart. Her lips, though not audible, shewed by their motion that she was repeating every word within herself ; and when I had finished, the words "charming ! she has indeed redeemed herself," escaped, though in a subdued voice, from her evidently o'er-fraught bosom ; and though she *said* no more, she completely, by the beaming intelligence of her eye, seconded her father when he said,

"A noble girl ! I retract all I said of her forwardness ; she has all the softness, with none of the violence, of Imogen."

"She is, indeed, a heroine," continued Bertha, after a little silent meditation, as if recalling the succeeding scenes ; "but a soft, as well as an energetic one ; and when I think of the accomplishments of her husband, and that all that she afterwards so boldly did, was to relieve his affectionate heart from the insupportable woe of thinking he had destroyed his friend, I can forgive, nay, even admire, her man's attire."

"I believe you, dearest," said Mr. Hastings ; "you would do it even for your father, were he in the same situation."

"It would not be the will that would be wanting," returned Bertha, looking fondly at her parent.

"I believe you there, too, my child," said Mr. Hastings, returning all the fondness of her looks, "for I verily think you would do as much for a father as a husband."

"As I am not married," observed she, half smiling, half seriously, "the experiment luckily cannot be made ; if I were, I would only pray that I might never be put to the trial ; for though, perhaps, I might be an Imogen, I could not be Belvidera."

"And why not?" asked her parent.

"Belvidera, you know, was the *darling* of her father's age ; and yet she left him 'in the dead of night.' That—whether in day or night—I could not do, whatever the merit of him who sought me

Indeed, the proposal to do so—wronging his benefactor on the tenderest point, when under such obligations to him—would have lowered my opinions of Jaffier, and rather turned me from him. This, and his weakness all through the play, cause a break in the interest, terrible as it is ; and I almost *love*, as well as esteem, Pierre, better than his friend.”

How did I not hang on all this ! How intensely did I not wish her to go on, when colouring, as if she was going too far in hazarding a critical opinion, she paused and stopped. Oh, how does not the retiring modesty of a woman enhance the beauty and expression of her sentiments, whatever their justness or rectitude !

“ Why does my dear Bertha pause ? ” said Mr. Hastings, to my great pleasure. “ Why does she not go on, and tell us her reason for preferring Imogen to Belvidera ? ”

“ Cymbeline was a tyrant,” answered Bertha ; “ Priuli, before he was *betrayed*, as I may say, by his daughter, and him he so bountifully protected, the most loving of fathers. His very revenge—so shocking, as to amount almost to madness, and for which he was so dreadfully punished afterwards, by remorse, the severest avenger—proceeded from his absorbing fondness for this child, who left him. But Cymbeline seems to have cared little for his daughter, to whom he had given Posthumus as a play-fellow ; and the attachments of play-fellows are not soon forgotten.”

Here she paused again, and, indeed, seemed much disconcerted, for I own I was devouring her with my eyes, while hers were downcast. Recovering at last, she said,

“ But I believe I had better not play the critic, papa, but leave you and Mr. De Clifford to settle the merits of the two ladies. All that I mean is, that Posthumus, being of a higher character than Jaffier, and Cymbeline less fond of his daughter than Priuli, I perhaps might have imitated Imogen, but not Belvidera.”

“ Then, as to Portia ? ” asked Mr. Hastings, seemingly delighted with her.

“ Oh ! she is altogether beyond me,” replied Bertha, “ almost to understand, much more to imitate. She is the noblest of heroines, and yet the gentlest of women. Her masculine exertions to relieve her husband’s anguish leave us all behind in energy ; yet her profession of what ought to be the feeling of a young creature about to give herself up to the man of her choice,

‘ As to her lord, her governor, and king,’

seems to belong to the most winning softness. I know nothing like it, even in Shakspeare.”

“I love your comments, my child, better than any thing,” said Mr. Hastings.

“Except the commentator?” observed I; and if my looks did not express the delight of my heart, I have neither heart to feel, nor looks to express any thing.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

I AM ALARMED AT A CHANGE IN BERTHA.—THE RESULTS TO WHICH IT LED.

Not so sick, my lord,
As she is troubled with thick-coming fancies.

SHAKSPEARE.—*Macbeth*.

To my astonishment, and probably my reader's too (especially after the last chapter), the next time I saw Bertha exhibited an eclipse of all those lovely beams of pleasure and intelligence which had been prompted by our delightful occupation. At dinner, where I had promised myself the pleasing familiarity which that family meal generally creates, Bertha was distant, timid, and silent, scarcely replying to any thing I directed to her; and her eyes, so far from encountering mine, were for the most part averted.

To me this seemed not less than an eclipse of the sun, which “with fear of change perplexes monarchs.” It was most certain that it thoroughly perplexed *me*. It was in vain I sought to account for it. At first, I thought she might be ill; but her looks forbade that, for never had she looked so well. Yet what had happened? Could she be capricious?—No. Did she wish to try her power?—No. To teaze?—No. To play the coquet?—O no!

I did all I could to bring her round. I tried to talk of Portia—she would not join. I asked questions as to Saxony—she knew nothing about it. Lady Hungerford's plans as an ambassadress—she seemed to have lost all interest in them. Never was there so dull a dinner, and never was I so glad to be released by the withdrawal of the ladies.

Willingly could I have left the table and sought the solitude of the park; but this the etiquette of Mr. Hastings, invalid as he was, forbade. He had engaged, prompted, I suppose, by questions about Germany, and Granville's approaching mission there, to give him a full sketch of its manners and politics immediately after the peace of Aix-la-Chapelle, when he began his travels, which ended in the

Saxon alliance. There was no stirring till this was over, when we were summoned to coffee in the drawing-room.

Alas ! here I found Bertha, though less distant, and almost striving to be civil, still absent, and far from giving me that frank look of amity, denoting the full intercourse of mind and thought, which had lately so delighted me. On the contrary, she seemed under constraint, and flying to Lady Hungerford, as it were for protection, on my approach.

I felt depressed, but for what reason I could not divine, and was not the happier because I knew her superior both to coquetry and caprice.

Her change was still more marked when, according to custom, music was proposed. It was not that she objected ; on the contrary, though she declared against singing, she hastened to look out some instrumental duets ; but when Lady Hungerford and Granville proposed vocal music, she opposed it still more, observing she was not equal to it. It was only when Lady Hungerford declared it would be their last vocal treat, perhaps for years, that she yielded, and selected an air of Zingarelli.

“ It is beautiful,” said Lady Hungerford ; “ but, on leaving Foljambe and Yorkshire, and Mr. Granville and Mr. De Clifford on almost the very spot where they composed it, I wish to hear once more that joint production of theirs which you used *once* to like, and sung so well—the stanzas to Hopeless Love.”

To my disappointment and dismay, Bertha made a thousand excuses. She had neither voice nor spirits ; which Granville said was very affronting ; while I, for my part, stood aloof, wondering what all this could mean, yet thinking it bad taste, as well as being afraid, to add my entreaty to the others.

While doubtful of success, however, Mr. Hastings himself came to the aid of the petitioners, saying it was ungracious to refuse while both author and composer were at her elbow ; and observing how he liked the air, and that he had not heard it for a long time, Bertha could no longer withstand what it absolutely puzzled as well as grieved me to think she had so long resisted. That it was personal to myself or Granville, I could not believe ; yet a sort of confusion in her manner, while evading the request, added to the perplexity which her demeanour had occasioned.

In this awkward way (for so I may call it) the stanzas commenced ; but soon all awkwardness fled, and was forgotten in the exquisite pathos of the air, and the feeling which this sweet daughter of harmony could not help infusing into it. We were all breathless while the performance went on, and when it was over, Granville said she had made him in love with his own composition ; to which, rallying, she answered, that was no compliment—it was so easy to

do so. But when Lady Hungerford was pleased to approve, and began to read some of the stanzas, she was actually confused, and looked embarrassed.

All was enigma to me, and not a pleasant one ; yet the composition, and the heightened beauty of the syren, with the justice she did to it, penetrated me to my inmost feeling. Still I said nothing, till Mr. Hastings, who had wheeled his chair close to the instrument, roused me by observing,

“ Why, you are not so frank as Granville ; you won’t confess the pleasure you must feel in the performance of a composition in which you had so great a share.”

To this I replied what I sincerely felt, that I thought so much more of the performance than the composition, that I had forgot who were the composers.

At this I observed Bertha looked down, and seemed again embarrassed, from which she was not relieved by what passed on my remarking that I never felt some of Waller’s most beautiful lines brought so home to me.

“ O ! pray let us have them,” said Lady Hungerford ; “ I like Waller’s little turns. I suppose they were to Sacharissa ? ”

“ If Chloris was Sacharissa,” I replied, “ they were ; but they are entitled only ‘ To a lady singing one of his own compositions.’ ”

But here I stopped for a moment, for at the name of Chloris I observed the confusion, if I may so call it, of Bertha increase ; she even blushed “ celestial, rosy red,” and Lady Hungerford gave her a significant look, while, almost to relieve her, she begged me to give them the lines I had mentioned. They were these :—

“ Chloris, yourself you so excel,
When you vouchsafe to breathe my thoughts,
That like a spirit, with a spell
Of my own teaching I am caught.

“ That eagle’s fate and mine are one,
Who on the shaft that made him die
Espied a feather of his own,
Wherewith he went to soar so high.”

“ Charming ! ” cried Lady Hungerford. “ Ingenious Waller ! ”

“ Ingenious Clifford, I think,” said Granville ; “ what says *ma petite cousine* ? ”

And he added in terms to Bertha, that she ought to thank me ; which put me rather upon the *qui vive*. Nor was I less so at the reply, when she said,

“ I have, indeed, much to thank Mr. De Clifford for, and upon this occasion I can only say that he was always very refined in his compliments, and fully keeps up his reputation.”

After this she relapsed into deep pensiveness, which lasted till she retired for the night, when she accompanied Lady Hungerford to her chamber.

What her last words portended, whether they signified approbation or tacit chiding, whether pleasure or displeasure at my allusion, I could by no means make out. I hoped the first, I feared the last; but the hopes and fears of lovers are too little reducible to reason to be understood, and my conjectures were endless during the night, both as to this, and still more as to the change of manner which had given me such uneasiness.

If not comforted, I was at least relieved from uncertainty the next morning after breakfast, by Granville. Lady Hungerford, it seems, had seen both this change in Bertha, and my dismay at it, and (kind and considerate woman!) had commissioned Granville to explain to me what she thought the cause, as also to beg my forgiveness for having perhaps been the occasion of it.

In short, whether by way of experimenting on the question (which she now owned she had so much at heart), or sheerly in a careless conversational mood, she had informed Bertha of the manner in which, after rallying me on my evident feelings, she had drawn from me the sonnet of Sir Charles Sedley, addressed to Chloris.

“This,” said Granville, “had filled Bertha with consternation, and alarmed her delicacy so much, that she feared to engage with you as usual, nay, avoided you, as you saw, and felt particularly unwilling to sing what would so strongly remind you of past scenes.”

“She wished those scenes then to be forgotten?” observed I.

“I did not gather that,” answered Granville; “but as the remembrance of them seemed called up by herself if she sang the air in question, and coming so immediately after your application of Sedley’s lines to her, it filled her with fears, which your own sense of a young woman’s delicacy may very well comprehend.”

“Well, indeed, can I comprehend,” said I, “any thing that connects delicacy with Bertha, and if this were all, I should be satisfied; but I fear I am here ‘paltered with in a double sense:’ this anxiety for the preservation of delicacy augurs little for my hopes of favour in another sense, if it does not extinguish them. Am I to understand that her freedom of manner, which so charmed me, can only be restored by her being relieved from all fear of being addressed by me as a lover? If so, I will only pray you to take me back with you to London after the ceremony, or afterwards to Germany; for I shall feel a second time banished from this too interesting place, where indeed I was not wise to hazard myself again.”

“Do not talk thus,” replied Granville, “for it will deeply hurt Honora, who, as it is, feels that she has not dealt discreetly by you,

in revealing whatever was to be revealed by this unfortunate sonnet of Sedley's. She certainly thought it might elicit something of encouragement for you, or she would not have ventured it."

"In which," said I (I fear rather testily), "it seems she did not succeed."

"Bertha was too much alarmed," returned Granville, "to be thoroughly understood, and this alarm, though it indicate nothing certain as to success, is, I think, any thing but discouraging. It indeed cuts both ways, but it shews no indifference, which you yourself once told me was the last thing a lover ought to wish to encounter."

"According to you, then," said I, "if she sedulously avoided me, and never spoke to me again, it would be encouragement."

He laughed, but said it was at least not so discouraging as a cold politeness. "However," added he, "the ladies are again closeted, and will be so for some time, as it is not yet Mr. Hastings' hour for appearing; and if you can calm yourself in the meanwhile, till they re-appear, as I have ten thousand things to do preparatory for to-morrow, and must therefore leave you, I would advise you to do so."

CHAPTER XXXIX.

CONFERENCES WITH LADY HUNGERFORD AND GRANVILLE, PROMISING TO LEAD TO THE CONSUMMATION OF MY OBJECT.

'Tis a consummation devoutly to be wished.

SHAKESPEARE.—*Hamlet*.

What say you, Hermia? Be advised, fair maid;
Demetrius is a worthy gentleman.

Midsummer Night's Dream.

IT is very easy for a man, the day before his marriage with the woman of his heart, and all his most favourite prospects in the world opening upon him to boot, to desire another, who is upon tenterhooks, to *calm* himself.

This was my reflection when the happy Granville left me alone to my sorry fancies, while he went to order the ten thousand things necessary for the happy business of the succeeding day.

Meantime I paced for ten weary minutes the eating-room where we had breakfasted; then sallied out and did as much by the hall; then went half-way up stairs, listened, and came down again, all to

no purpose. I wondered what the ladies were about; why ladies had so many secrets who had been nearly a month together; why these had any secrets at all, now that one had parted with her lover, and the other was so soon to take a husband. Above all, I wondered why they should prefer being alone, when a young gentleman was waiting below longing to walk and talk with them.

These movements and reflections of mine, however, did not bring them down, and to vary the scene I walked into the flower-garden. There, looking up to the window of Bertha's *boudoir*, I saw Lady Hungerford affectionately embracing her, both ladies, as far I could make out, a good deal agitated. "*Chère petite maman*," said I; "she is fondly taking her last leave of her in private;" and for fear of intruding upon their notice, I walked away.

I took several turns, but still they had not descended; and though I knew not why, in so very simple and very usual a matter as a *tête à tête* between two friends, I wondered that this conference should last so long. It seemed as if it never would have an end.

It was not till I was returning to the house, full half-an-hour after I had left it, that I beheld Bertha through the door-way, crossing the hall to her father's room, and Lady Hungerford presently advancing down the steps as if to meet me. She seemed full of meaning, both in her countenance and action, and said rather gaily,

"As I have lost my knight, I must put up with my squire, as a lady of my consequence cannot take the air unattended, and I want air."

I told her, with as much sincerity as gallantry, that there was no service that could be imposed upon me so agreeable, and that I rejoiced that Granville was so occupied that I might for a moment be lord in waiting in his room.

"O!" said she, "never mind him till to-morrow; the remainder of this day I give to you, as I already have the beginning of it. I have much to tell you, and I think we must adjourn to the summer-house, which has always been to you so eventful."

I was up in arms in an instant, for I saw there was something important on her mind, which, after this long conference with her friend, I thought portended something of no mean consequence; and I would have hurried her to the spot she had appointed, but for my respect, and that she protested she would take her own time and her own way in every thing she had to say. I saw there was nothing left for it but to obey, and allowed her, teasingly, as I thought, for it was very slowly, to lead the way to the ominous place.

"The arms of Saxony!" said she, as, on entering, she looked at the pediment over the door; "and the prince of Saxony!" as she looked at the print over the chimney-piece. "Well, luckily for you, and unluckily for him, that it is all done away with. But, let

me see, I perceive not Mansell here, nor Melford; she should have had them, if only to keep them in remembrance, or look at them as trophies."

"Dear, dear Madam," cried I, "what is all this? Have you led me here to sport with me, after laying me on the rack? It is not like you. For heaven's sake, relieve me—let me not die in ignorance."

"I allow," said she, more seriously and most kindly, "you have some reason to complain; but, believe me, I am not sporting with you; I am only not quite certain how to begin, for I am almost astounded myself with wonder. Season, however, your admiration for a while; let me recollect myself, and I will endeavour methodically to tell you, that I think I see sunshine through the cloud; though in the first instance I have to throw myself on your mercy, for I have betrayed you."

"And is that all?" cried I, much disappointed. "Those foolish verses of Sir Charles were not worth being kept a secret. Granville has just unravelled that mystery. Be assured, dear lady, you are completely pardoned, if such a word can be applied from me to you, and more especially for such a thing."

"Has Mr. Granville then told you no more? Has he related nothing that passed between him and his uncle yesterday?"

"Not a syllable."

"I find, then," continued Lady Hungerford, "I have more to do than I thought; though, if you know Mr. Hastings, you must have seen that you are no common person in his estimation."

"To his civilities, nay, I trust I may add, his friendship," returned I, "I must ever be alive; but I have observed no more."

"See what it is to be modest," replied the lady. "I tell you that his estimation of you is not a common one; nay, *for him*, it is a most *uncommon* one. He leaned much to you for your conduct to his son, and from feeling the injustice of that son's conduct to you. You won his heart afterwards by your attentions to him on occasion of the terrible catastrophe of poor Foljambe's death; and though your unfortunate delirium made separation necessary, still he regretted your loss as a companion, and followed your progress in the world with interest. But the vivid attachment you shewed for his honour, and that of his darling, heightened a hundred-fold, he said, from the cold treatment you had met with from them, and supported by such gallantry, under such danger, wound up the whole, and he affirmed to Mr. Granville (an amazing admission for *him*), that he loved you as a son."

I was delighted, as may be supposed, to hear all this; but, not in the least knowing what it tended to,

"My dearest Madam," said I, "for pity's sake, tell me to what,

if any thing, this intimation can lead. Flattering and pleasing as it must be to be so thought of by any one, but particularly by Mr. Hastings, that it will advance me one inch to the fondest object of my life, I do not see."

"Then, you are less clear-sighted than I thought," answered the lady; "for do you not see from Bertha's whole character, that before she could permit her heart to have the semblance of a feeling such as you covet, she must be fortified by the certainty that it would be approved by the parent she adores?"

"Yes, dear lady," said I; "no one can see the father and daughter together, but must be convinced of that. Her devotion of herself to the maintenance of his honour with the prince would alone prove it, even if I had not witnessed it in all those beautiful sentiments of filial piety which our little readings have recently elicited. But of what avail is it to me that her father thinks well of me; nay, even (if that could be known) that he would not reject me as a son-in-law, unless I had made far more way than I feel I have, where almost alone it is of consequence? Witness the strangeness of her altered tone and distant manner upon a mere and most uncertain hint of my feelings towards her, so recently as last night."

Lady Hungerford here seemed a little conscious of something she knew not how to explain, and paused long before she replied. She seemed to be seeking for the proper answer, looked round the room, and adjusted parts of her dress. At length, with a heightened colour, and some hesitation, she said,

"I was ever a bad one at what may be called management. I am unable to dissemble if I would, and own myself a little entangled. Fear of compromising both your friend Granville and myself, perhaps I may also say Mr. Hastings and his daughter, induced me to attempt what is generally dangerous, and never honest, a half confidence. The straightest way, therefore, is to make up for it by an unreserved frankness, and to confess that, urged by our entire and warmest wishes for your success, we could not leave either you or this dear family (especially on the eve of our departure from all of you for some years), plunged, as you seem to be, in endless uncertainties upon the tenderest, as well as the most important question that can be agitated, and not make an effort to extricate you. You have yourself often said that absolute rejection was better than suspense; yet, whether from modesty or hopelessness, you have taken no measures to put an end to suspense; nor could I myself know how to counsel you till within these four-and-twenty hours, when, from what fell in Mr. Granville's conference with his uncle, and mine with my dearest Bertha, I resolved not to risk a failure of your consent by consulting you, but to disclose all I knew at once. In a word, my betrayal of you has gone much farther than the mere

gallantry of the verses to Chloris. Reproach me, if you please, but forgive me if you can, for I have disclosed your whole secret, and Bertha knows how much, how long, and with what constancy you have loved her."

It is not easy to say how I received this startling intelligence. The crisis of my fate was thus brought home, in a manner indeed most kindly meant by the person in the world whom I most considered and admired, and who only honoured me by the interest she took in me; but not the less was it a crisis, fraught with happiness or misery. I felt all its importance, and all its danger—that I was walking on ground mined underneath, and that a few minutes, nay, another word from Lady Hungerford, might overthrow my whole scheme and hope of happiness, and send me for ever into distant banishment.

My anxiety may be imagined, nay, was depicted in my face to such a degree, that Lady Hungerford was alarmed, and was forced, she said, to smile more perhaps than was warrantable, in order to keep me at peace with myself, to say nothing of her.

"Come," said she, "I see I have summoned up all the constitutional agonies that make such a havoc with your heart whenever it is affected. Do you know you will never make a great man, and least of all, a great statesman, whose first quality is either to be without feeling, or to disguise if he have it, so as it can never be discovered. You might at least have waited till your death-warrant, was signed before you became so terrified. This is not yet the fact; and though I cannot tell, with any certainty, what *is*, I can tell you that Bertha has long thought of and valued you as a brother, which, for the present, ought to content you."

"Ah!" said I, "how much may or may not be in that '*at present*?' and how tame——"

"For a lover," interrupted Lady Hungerford, "to be ranked only as a brother. Are you, then, one of those ardent spirits which value only that sort of love that takes and shews fire like touch-wood, and of course burns out soon? I should rather have thought that the pupil of Mr. Fothergill and Mr. Manners would have preferred (as, be assured, experience will prove to you that you ought to prefer) the affection which is the gentle and quiet growth of deep-seated esteem. Such, I may say, is what at this moment actuates me to take the awful step which is about to decide the cast of my life; and such, I will venture to predict, if you do not throw it away, may in time produce all you wish in her of whom you have so long thought, and so long despaired. But, I cry you mercy!" continued she in an altered tone, seeing that I was not so overjoyed as she expected. "You think, perhaps, that this sort of love, even if it exist (which I know not that it yet does), is of too cold and slow

a growth. You gentlemen enthusiasts would only value a mistress who would, on a moment's warning, be ready at a window with a ladder of ropes. This is not Bertha's character, who, however I could please, and excite, perhaps sport with you, by telling you how she received the intelligence I gave her of your attachment——"

"Ah! Madam!" said I, "if you would make me your slave for the rest of my life, stop not here; but tell me."

"Very good," said she; "but as you are to be Bertha's slave, not mine, this will be no inducement. At any rate, it would disappoint you; for it was not half vehement enough. There were no tears; no hysterics; not even a tremor—a few blushes indeed."

"O!" cried I, seeing her stop again; "keep your word—do not sport with me, but go on."

"It is because I will not sport with you, that I am thus plain in my recital. Miss Hastings, with all her vivacity, all her softness of feeling, is, as I told you, no enthusiast. It is quite sufficient for you that she seemed any thing but sorry for the news I gave her, and allowed you were the man in the world whom from childhood she had most esteemed."

"Delightful! Amiable Bertha!" cried I, and was going on, when Lady Hungerford interrupted me.

"Be not too soon elate," she added; "for, notwithstanding this, she would not allow her feelings to exceed their present tranquil state."

"Tranquil state! Are they then so tranquil?"

"They are, and ought to be; and if your own were so too, and you had given me time to finish, I would have added—until the whole matter was laid before her father; and if he did not oppose, she would then——"

"Ah!—what?"

"Consider."

"O Heavens!—consider! What, no more?—not, even with her father's consent, more than consider?"

"And enough, too. Surely you could not expect her even to consider whether she should accept an offer or not, before she knew her father's opinion?"

"True! true! I had forgot that."

"Well, then, I think I have, upon the whole, done you eminent service, and you will not only forgive, but feel obliged to me. Be assured I have, since last night, brought you a mile nearer to your object than you would have brought yourself in the next twelve months; and you may thank my own situation—about to leave both you and Bertha for a long and indefinite time (you irresolute; Bertha ignorant; both of you without a common friend)—for prompting me to so critical a proceeding."

It may be supposed how gratefully I expressed myself for this kindness, as well as how full of admiration I was at such energy. Certainly, this exquisite woman was, in both, the wonder of her sex.

“Now one thing more,” added she, “before we break up this conference. There must be no disguises, no acting of parts, between you hereafter. She indeed is above it, and you too, but for what I cannot altogether blame, a sense of old inferiority, which, though only worldly, does not any longer even exist. You now know each other’s position. She—that you love, and seek permission to woo her; you—that she at least esteems you more than other men. I will not conceal from you that, if her father is favourable, I look for this esteem as likely to ripen into something much warmer, nay, as warm as you can wish; but you must have patience, for the contrary may ruin you.”

How did my heart leap at this! But could I help asking if she had any *particular* reason for it?

“None, be assured,” said she, “except from common observation; so do not (odd compound as you are of sanguineness and fear—of confidence and despair) imagine that any thing specific has passed between us. My surmise is the result of mere ordinary penetration; for no unsophisticated young woman would have given that consequence which her changed behaviour to you intimated last evening, upon the incident of the verses, unless something more than common played round her heart. But we loiter here, when we have but a few hours left, which ought to be given to action. By we, I mean Mr. Granville as well as myself; I believe he is at this moment with his uncle, watching opportunity; for I own the only thing wanting to my own happiness is to leave that of two persons whom I so much regard, in a way to be realized. So, for a time, farewell. No thanks, for I cannot stay to receive them.”

At this she flew off, leaving me in Bertha’s hermitage, which appeared now, more than ever, the temple of purity and love. Here my heart and mind felt in a wilderness of thought and feeling, from which I did not, for a very long time, awaken.

When I did, I staggered towards the house, when I met Granville, who was coming in quest of me. He instantly seized my arm, and hurrying me into that walk in which, remarkably, near three years before, he had so emphatically urged the necessity for my renouncing all my feelings for Bertha, he there congratulated me on the prospect which he said he thought had now opened in my favour.

“Both Honora and I,” said he, “have been at work for you. I know what has passed between you, and that she acquainted you with the critical importance which might result from the interview

I have just had with my uncle. Not to torture you, therefore, with suspense, I think I may say it has been decidedly favourable, and at once give you joy."

At these words the dear fellow flew into my arms, as I did into his, and to relieve my impatience he proceeded at once in his story.

"Honora," said he, "informed you that I had gone to Mr. Hastings' apartment to watch an opportunity. I did not do so long, for he almost immediately made one. 'Sit near me, nephew,' said he, 'and talk to me of your approaching happiness. You have ever been a son to me, and more than a son.' At this he sighed deeply, and added, 'how extraordinary—perhaps, I may say, how cruel—my fate, that I should meet with more care and consolation from you, more distant from me in blood, and even from another with whom I have no connection at all, than from him who is gone, though my own flesh and blood!'

"By another, you mean Mr. Clifford, dear Sir," said I, "and I believe you judge rightly of his attachment to you. 'Tis a little hard,' observed he, 'that he, too, must leave me as well as you, and at the same time as you and dear Lady Hungerford. As for me, I shall never see any of you again, and we may as well part now, in a less mournful manner, as six months hence. But what poor Bertha is to do without her friend, the only one she has loved, or allowed herself to love, in the world, is a bitter thought to me. I now perceive how wrong, how selfish—how very selfish I have been, in agreeing to allow her (for it was her own determination, against my better judgment) to immure herself here, in watching the decline of a useless old man. She has not the place that belongs to her in the world, and has laid no ground for it after I am gone. Yet your dear Honora, who was the sister of her infancy, and the friend of her youth, as it ripened, will, I know, not abandon her; but you will be abroad when I am called.'

"Here the old man let fall some anxious tears, which much affected me. I endeavoured to console him, but without much success. 'I have considered the matter,' said he, 'in all its points. God tempers the wind to the shorn lamb, and my child will, I dare say, not want for friends; and, though our rays are diminished, she is still an heiress, and will not want for fortune; but, on account of that very fortune, she may the more want protection; and, above all, her heart will want a partner, for it is a social heart.'

"Here again my good uncle was a little overcome. 'Hitherto,' continued he, 'I have, strange to say, appeared to fill that heart; at least the only one to share it with me was she who has given hers to you. No one who has addressed her ever succeeded in impressing it; and here, again, I am bowed down with self-blame for hav-

ing harassed her with that long engagement, which has only just left her free. It is not that any of those who courted her could have made her happy, except, perhaps, poor, lost Melford, had he turned out differently ; but the engagement was a bar to all, and she voluntarily lived the life of a nun. All this makes me feel our approaching separation the more, and will embitter my final departure ten-fold. To-morrow—to you a day of rejoicing—will to us be one of mourning; and not the less, because the day after will take from us one whom, from the generous attachment he has shewn to our honour, and the interest which he in every thing seems to take in us, we appreciate as he deserves. I shall greatly miss him myself; but when Bertha has lost her *chaperon* and you, I see not how, with propriety, I can ask so young a person to prolong his visit, where she will, of necessity, be almost his only companion.'

"I was meditating what answer to make to this (which indeed was not easy), when, to my surprise, and pleasure too, he went on, as if it had suddenly struck him, 'Ay; if he, or such a one as he, had been among those who addressed her during the engagement with her cousin, what a relief would it have been, now it is over, to all those fears and anxieties I have been expressing to you.'

"I felt, as I have said, surprised, nay, astonished at this. What I had been with so much eagerness and care endeavouring to bring about, exhausting all my forethought and ingenuity to provide against the difficulties that seemed to surround it, appeared here almost settled to my hand, and only to require a word of explanation to complete it.—But, my good friend," added Granville, seeing me here much agitated, "if you cannot bear this communication better, we must stop, or adjourn to yonder bench, or you will certainly be down. You are pale and red, by turns, and seem to have lost your breath—if you are going to lose your senses too, pray give me notice, for it will spare me the rest of my tale."

"O! Granville," said I, "spare raillery; this is not a matter for wit—for heaven's love, go on."

"Can you bear it?" asked he, and made as if he would feel my pulse. "Come, pretty calm again. Well, then, to proceed:—I almost doubted whether I had understood Mr. Hastings to mean seriously what his words implied; to ascertain it I actually observed (forgive me for it)—'With all my esteem and love for Mr. Clifford, I never could have supposed this, knowing that, though he is a gentleman both in birth and education, his family have been so reduced as to be in a very moderate condition.'

"'I care not for their condition,' replied he, with some quickness; 'they are all of them Normans; he is himself now owner of the identical castle of his ancestors, the ancient barons; and my creed, you know, is, that the blood of a gentleman can never be

washed out. But, far beyond this, he has given proofs of the nobleness of his nature, as well as of his family, in his generous devotion of himself towards us, spite, not only of appalling danger, but of affronting and ungrateful slights on our parts. In this too he seemed the instrument of the vengeance of heaven upon the murderer of my poor boy. But why waste words upon this part of the subject? The question will never arise. I see no signs of it on either side. The wanderings of a youth in a delirium from a fever were nothing, and ought not to have been noticed. What I admire in him is, his gratuitous attention to us since, and the gallant hazard he ran in defence of our good name, without any other possible motive than a generous desire to vindicate our honour. No, no. It will be time enough to talk of objections, when something more appears than the mere friendliness of childhood, which is renewed between him and Bertha.'

" 'Uncle,' said I, 'will you let me express an opinion upon this?'

" 'Willingly, my dear nephew,' replied he.

" 'Then forgive me, if I think differently from you, and with good ground, in regard to his feelings towards Bertha. Shall I even confess to you that I know that for years, nay, from the first moment he saw her, his heart has been entirely hers, with a devotion almost without example; that he did all he could to overcome it, from his sense of its hopelessness on account of his inferiority; but that it haunted him day and night, sleeping and waking, and he nursed it in secret till it became part of himself; and though he breathed not a syllable of it to my cousin, nor to me, till I detected it myself, he cherished it in humble distance, resolving, he said, that it should descend with him to the grave, without its ever being known to her, or to you?'

" 'Quite like himself, and most like a gentleman,' said my uncle, though with a look of astonishment. 'But go on. With such a resolution, why did he trust himself here?'

" 'His worldly situation is much changed,' answered I.

" 'Ha!' exclaimed Mr. Hastings; 'what am I to understand by that? Has he addressed Bertha?'

" 'He said this with agitation.——'No?' replied I, quickly, 'or you would have in the instant known it from her, as soon as she knew it herself, but from him before; for, much as he loved her, he never would have even told his love without your previous approbation.'

" 'That alters the case,' observed Mr. Hastings, still in a sort of confusion from surprise; 'but how is it then that neither of us have known any thing of it?'

" 'From the same modesty,' answered I, 'which he felt in humbler circumstances, and which has not yet abandoned him. I know

that up to yesterday he was in misery, from doubt of the event ; and even talked of accompanying me to Germany, in despair both of her affection and your consent.'

" ' If he can gain her affection,' replied my uncle, after a little thought, ' I know not why he should despair of my consent.'

" He said this with an air of dignified decision, as if he had measured all your pretension with his own, and, only after the consideration due to his own, had decided in your favour. I must, however, do the dear old man the justice to say that he added, ' 'Tis true, Bertha is no longer the rich heiress she was, such being the will of Providence, "the wind and storm fulfilling his word". But as, if she were poorer than she will be, I am sure this would make no difference in him ; so, were she richer than she is, it would make none in me.'

" I sincerely complimented him upon this honourable sentiment."

" And what must I do? my dear Granville," cried I, no longer able to keep silence. " How admire or thank him enough? O! that some favourable aspect may appear in the other horizon, which I begin verily almost to believe may be, under the auspices of that incomparable woman, who, like yourself, seems born to be my tutelary deity. How can I ever thank you, my true friend, for all you have told me?"

" Still there is much to do," observed Granville.

" Which it makes my heart tremble to think of," said I. " Pray did Mr. Hastings suggest nothing in regard to my proceedings?"

" Nothing ; except that he was so pleased with your honourable intentions, of first apprizing him of your views before you addressed his daughter, that he gives you *carte blanche* to act as you please, determining, in the mean time, in order to leave you a fair field, as he thinks would be most agreeable to you, not to interpose with either persuasion or advice. Can you wish for more?"

" O, no! If to be a messenger of good tidings is to be one, you are an absolute evangelist. Again, how shall I thank you?"

" By letting me see you as happy as myself."

" God send it!"

¹ Evidently alluding to the hurricane.

CHAPTER XL.

OF THE NOBLE CANDOUR DISPLAYED BY BERTHA.—FRIENDSHIP AND GOOD OFFICES
OF LADY HUNGERFORD.

—
If it were now to die,

'T were now to be most happy ; for I fear
My soul hath her content so absolute,
That not another comfort like to this
Succeeds in unknown fate.

SHAKSPEARE.—*Othello*.

THE information from Granville with which I concluded the last chapter made, as may be supposed, a considerable change for the better in all my prospects. Furnished with such armour of proof as the favourable disposition of Mr. Hastings, I gave way with more confidence to the delight inspired by Lady Hungerford's assurances.

Yet I felt bewildered, and knew not exactly how to proceed. At first I was for instantly seeking a personal interview with Bertha ; then, thinking that too confident, for sending to ask permission for an audience in form ; then, to address her through Lady Hungerford, whom I would entreat to be my mediatrix ; then through her father himself. But I could determine finally upon none of these plans, and suffered not a little raillery from Lady Hungerford, who, however, consoled me by saying she liked me the better for it.

"I would not care half so much," said she, "for the success of your object, if I saw you setting methodically about it, as a matter of business, or even with the dignity and self-possession of an experienced great man of the world. Your tremors and indecision are quite taking, and I would not help you, if I could, to get rid of them ; except, indeed, that, as I am to leave you all to-morrow, it would be more pleasant to leave you comfortable. Indeed, anxiety about my dearest Bertha is the only alloy I feel to my own happiness."

Then seeing that I was still in a confusion of plans, the kind lady said—

"Well, I perceive you scholars and fine-minded people are but children after all, where a love affair is concerned. Why, a French marquis, or even an English militia captain, would beat you all to nothing were the case theirs ; and I think I must continue to be the patroness you used to do me the honour to call me, and so far smoothe the way, as to communicate to your queen, what she ought

in the first instance to know—the result of Mr. Granville's conference with his uncle this morning."

This greatly relieved me, and my face I suppose shewed it, for she said—

"There, now the sun shines again! I have but an hour more of the morning for my own affairs, but I will give half of it to yours."

So saying, she left me, but before she tript quite away, advised me not by any means to part with my anxious look, but go and walk under Bertha's window, with my arms folded across, my hat slouched over my eyes; "and be sure," said she, "to sigh like furnace." Her cheerful tone did me all the good possible, and I thanked my stars for having given me such a friend.

Her half hour, however, lengthened into a whole one, and indeed seemed so unbearably long, that I was tempted to obey her last piece of advice to the letter, and found myself actually under the window pointed out, almost in the very predicament recommended; only it would have been in vain, for there was no one above to behold it.

In time she came back, with a busy seriousness, though not a sorrowful one, in her eye, and taking me with her along the terrace, said kindly and encouragingly—

"I have been long, for such explanations cannot be made in the twinkling of an eye, and a young lady cannot be expected to yield herself up to a young gentleman on a summons being sent her by a neutral power. Not however to frighten you, for I see you are already alarmed, I come to conduct you to Bertha, and to tell you she is too good a daughter not to obey her father.—No raptures, but let quiet be the order of the day, for she is overcome with surprise, and in no mood to encounter a storm."

"My dear, dear Madam—" cried I.

"I tell you be quiet," said she, "and even silent, if possible, with Bertha herself, to whom I have promised to bring you."

"Oh! tell me but where, that I may fly——"

"No! flying won't do, neither. You must proceed soberly with me to the garden door of her father's room, where she is, and which is luckily vacant just now for half an hour, he being driving out with Mr. Granville, with whom he has business; and when there, I shall leave you. Nay, if you tremble so, I will not answer for your success."

I could augur nothing ill from such pleasantry, so accompanied the dear lady round to the other side of the house, and, through the glass door, into the well-known room, where I found the long-loved object of my vows. Certainly, as her friend had told me, she seemed in no condition to encounter a storm; for she appeared faint, agitated, and deeply pensive; and when we entered, moved

not her head from the hand which supported it, her elbow leaning on the end of the sofa where she was sitting.

Though her cheek was flushed, and her eyes averted, she had stretched out the other hand on one of the cushions, and Lady Hungerford perceiving it, placed it gently in mine, and saying she thought she could not do better than leave us by ourselves, fairly quitted the room.

Oh, what a moment! after all I had gone through! and what wonder if I scarcely possessed my mind any more than Bertha herself, whose eyes continued to be covered by the hand on which she leaned, though the other gladdened my very soul by returning the pressure of mine. Nay, when dropping on one knee, I pressed it to my lips, though there was a sort of struggle (a very gentle one) to withdraw it, she did not altogether take it from me, but allowed it still to remain.

At last, finding my tongue, which till now had denied its office, I exclaimed,

“Oh, God of heaven! is it possible that I can be thus repaid at last, after years of devotion, torture, and despair? Is it possible that Lady Hungerford’s intelligence can be true, and that I am not in a dream? If I am, let me never awake, nor again encounter the misery and hopelessness of reality.”

Bertha’s only answer, at first, was by a more sensible pressure by her hand; but in a few moments I heard, in a still, soft whisper, the words,

“No, Mr. De Clifford, as I must believe all I have been told of my father’s approbation, it is no dream; but (and her voice here became softer and softer), as Lady Hungerford has no doubt told you, you must not take me away from *him*.”

Then turning her glowing cheek (glowing with the purest blush of modesty that ever love knew), and seeing me still on my knee, she said with quickness,

“Oh! why is this? Surely this does not become Mr. De Clifford to descend to, nor me to suffer. This must never—never be. Oh! rise—rise, I entreat you.”

I obeyed; and taking my seat by her side, we felt, by degrees, somewhat more at ease. To detail however, all that passed in this delicious moment of unlooked-for happiness—of unreserved and authorized confidence—is not only not necessary, but would be impossible if it were. Suffice it, that my feelings were gratified to their utmost power of bearing, by the dear and melting tidings which, by degrees, she allowed me to elicit from her; for I learned, with what feelings may be imagined, that she had perceived my love for her even in her girlhood, from the earliest moments of its existence; had felt it with an interest only enhanced by seeing it

cherished so long in silence and distance, under fears and hopelessness, such as had always prevented its open profession; that its constancy under so many trials, but, in particular, under that great one of supposed unkindness, had touched her heart with a sort of remorse, which a sense of her engagement could alone dispel; but that when the engagement was at an end, the warmth I had shewn in her defence when attacked, and the appalling danger I had encountered in asserting her cause, had weakened her self-control, so that when she saw me once more under the paternal roof, possessing so much of her father's regard, and my cause espoused by the friends she most loved in the world, she acknowledged that all I wished was reciprocal. Finally, to my ineffable delight, she wound up these confessions (though I only gained them from her after many intervals of pause and hesitation, which increased their interest a hundred-fold) with a frank avowal, in the very words of Portia—which had never been absent from her memory since she heard them—that she willingly committed her gentle spirit to mine, to be directed,

“As from her lord, her governor, and king.”

Let those who, like me, have loved to desperation, imagine, if they can, the effect of this thrilling confession on the ears that heard, and the heart that felt it. Language in vain attempts to describe it, and sinks in the endeavour. All that can be said is, that the sweet character of this delightful creature was arrayed in its own peculiar lustre, and that openness, softness, delicacy, and affection (now not only not opposed, but encouraged to develop themselves), shone out in all their purity, and all their attraction.

Their effect upon my faculties, which had so long been oppressed with doubt and uncertainty—the sport of every whisper, and almost every look,—was miraculous. My powers were suddenly strengthened, as by a potent spell or vivifying cordial, and I felt that not that nepenthe, given in Egypt by the wife of Thone to Jove-born Helena,

“Was of such power to stir up joy as this.”

I will not say that this was the happiest moment of my life, because tumultuous happiness yields in real joy to that which is more sedate, and, thanks to heaven and this inestimable person, I have had many moments with her since, more tranquil, yet far more precious in their effect upon the heart. But never had her beauty, set off with the maiden blush of modesty, appeared to my charmed eyes half so engaging. Had I, therefore, been conqueror of the world, I could not have felt more elate; and at a loss to thank her,

spite of her prohibition, I threw myself again at her feet, and invoked the blessing of heaven upon her dear head, for the goodness and noble frankness she had shewn.

How long we might have remained in this delirium (for it was little less) I don't know, but it was put an end to by the return of Lady Hungerford, who, seeing how things were, fondly kissed her young friend, and shaking hands with me, congratulated herself upon having produced such a happy state of things, the consummation of which, by being ratified by Mr. Hastings, was all, she said, that was now wanting.

This, we hoped, was now at hand, by the return of the carriage in which Granville had driven his uncle for an airing. Bertha was confused, and trembled at the approach of her father; and Lady Hungerford proposed her retiring to her chamber to regain a little calm, in which she acquiesced: and as Mr. Hastings generally reposed for half an hour by himself after returning from his drive, we all retreated from his apartment to leave it free.

Meantime this best of friends, with her usual presence of mind, planned with Granville the mode of communicating what had passed to Mr. Hastings, on his awakening from his usual noontide doze.

With what restlessness did I not watch the progress of it—how I wished old people were not invalids; or if they were, and were forced to sleep in the daytime, that they would not sleep so long.

It was just an hour after Mr. Hastings took to his couch before he awoke from his refreshing slumber, and called for his daughter, instead of whom Granville presented himself. Meantime I had not known how to beguile the interval. Lady Hungerford was once more shut up with her dear pupil, and Granville was most provokingly absorbed in marriage papers, which had to be inspected and signed before the next morning. I was therefore left entirely to myself, to indulge my hopes in soliloquy, or whisper my fears to the oaks and beeches of the park.

But, thanks to my happy fortunes, there was no occasion for fear. Mr. Hastings' waking was one of the *molliora tempora fandi*, which Granville, with his usual kindness and usual promptitude, seized, and, as he frankly said, with little, or rather no difficulty, profited by it so effectually, that an hour afterwards beheld both Bertha and myself on our knees, kissing the hands of her father, and asking and receiving his blessing, and as free and full consent to our union as my own or Bertha's dutiful heart could wish.

And here, having brought the more changeful parts of my life, though yet in its early days, to a termination, I might close these memoirs. For though eventful to me, and amply confirming all the maxims regarding human life which I had imbibed from my sage and practised preceptors, Fothergill, Manners, and Lord Cas-

leton, few incidents remain which might particularly interest the reader. I cannot, however, conclude without noticing the consummation of the happiness of my two admirable friends, to whom I owe the chief blessing of my life, in her who gilded its dawn, its meridian, and its sunset.

I wish also to add to these notices, one which, for the sake of the moral it affords, if not for the intrinsic interest it contains, may be deemed not an unimportant feature in perhaps the most important of all sciences, the science of Human Nature.

CHAPTER XLI.

OF THE VAIN EFFORTS TO RECOVER FROM THE EFFECTS OF VICE WHEN MADE TOO LATE.—AFFECTING CONCLUSION OF THE HISTORY OF SIR HARRY MELFORD.

Try what repentance can. What can it not?
Yet what can it, when one cannot repent?

SHAKESPEARE.—*Hamlet*.

THE allusion made at the end of the last chapter was to Sir Harry Melford, a man who, whether from his original disposition to value the decencies, if not the virtues of life, or the accomplishments of his mind and manners, was certainly made for better fortune than befel him.

Our last mention of him was at a dinner at Granville's in town, where he shewed a humour and perversion of principle, which made it little likely that he should so soon, or at all, exhibit such feelings as the letter I am about to transcribe evinces. It was received by Granville only the day before his nuptials, and was written to him in consequence of the expectation of them, which was spread all over Yorkshire.

I had observed the arrival of the packet, and that it instantly occasioned a seriousness both in Granville and Lady Hungerford. They were closeted upon it for near an hour, and afterwards, to my great wonder, with Bertha. For, happy as I was, I was still sensitive, and dreaded some announcement respecting the prince, or perhaps a new suitor. The conference, too, lasted long, nor was I relieved by seeing that the two ladies were considerably affected. I was, however, restored by being allowed to read the packet, which was as follows:—

in his gratitude, bursts into that ebullition of admiration for the sex, elicited by his love for his wife, which had charmed me so often, it was not easy for me to be so close to the exemplification of its justice, and proceed with calmness. In fact, I looked at Bertha more than at the book, when I repeated rather than read—

“Oh! woman! lovely woman! Nature made thee
To temper man: we had been brutes without you:
Angels are painted fair to look like you:
There's in you all that we believe of heaven,
Amazing brightness, purity and truth,
Eternal joy and everlasting love.”

This glowing picture of all that I had so long loved, while the object of it was seated so close to me, and in every turn of her countenance shewed its fidelity, so overpowered me, that, no longer master of myself, the book fell from my hands, and little was wanting to shew what was passing within me.

“It is nothing,” said I, seeing my friends under some anxiety, thinking I was ill. “A little air will cure all this.”

And Bertha anticipated me in opening the door into the garden. I returned to the book, and would have resumed it; but both father and daughter protested against it, and Mr. Hastings proposed that Bertha should go on with the play.

“That would disgrace me,” said I.

“I am sure it would *me*,” observed Bertha. “I never knew what it was that gave Otway the character of pathetic before. No; I will never pretend to read him aloud.”

At this moment the butler announced it was twelve o'clock, and that the pony-chair was ready.

“I am glad of it,” said Bertha; “for the mere opening of this sad tale has upset me.”

“Well,” said I, “pray don't upset the pony-chair.”

Which Mr. Hastings declared was a *bon mot*, and as Sterne said a *bon mot* was always worth a pinch of snuff, he offered me his box.

Left to myself in the library, I more than ever revolved my situation, and found it only the more dangerous, from the very circumstances which I had courted at a distance with so much ardour; I mean the disappearance of all uncertainty as to Bertha's engagement, and the wonderful changes in my own fortune. Had these difficulties continued, all that would have been left me would have been to have submitted to my fate as a matter of necessity, which, in time, I might have accomplished. But these being done away, and the ground left fairly open, my hopes were no longer occupied with any thing extraneous, or beyond my control, but were all

centred in the one powerful question, dependant upon my own merits and pretensions, the decision of which could not now be far off.

This was the fearful point at which I had arrived. In this agitated state I had continued a full hour; when, by way of diversion of thought, I took down from the bookshelves, not a sermon, or Seneca's *Morals*, which courted my first notice, but a volume of Sir Charles Sedley's amatory poems; and in conning these over I was surprised by Lady Hungerford, who had returned from her ride, during which she had fallen in with Mr. Hastings and Bertha.

My surprise may be imagined, when, rather abruptly (perhaps, for her, indiscreetly), she accosted me with—

“Well, Mr. De Clifford, I find you have this morning gained Bertha's heart.”

I started at the words, looked pale and red, and began to stammer out my wonder, when she cooled all by saying,

“There I have done wrong; I never considered how little you sanguine people can bear to be metaphorically treated, and how matter-of-fact every thing ought to be that alludes to your feelings. Know then, that by gaining the lady's heart, I meant nothing but her praise (and give me leave to tell you, that is no light thing), for the manner in which you read Otway this morning.”

“And did she not add, how like a simpleton I behaved—that a green school-girl could not have done worse?”

“She said you frightened her by being taken ill, but I heard nothing of being a simpleton.”

On this I could not help recounting to my kind protectress all that had oppressed my fancy, in regard to my own case, as the play proceeded, till at last it overcame me—when she observed,

“This will never do. Why, in nerves, cousin Mansell would beat you hollow; and, had he chosen to stay, with such inconvenient feelings as yours, might have proved a powerful rival.”

“And would you have me discard those feelings?”

“Not exactly; but I would not have them prevent action at a crisis where action is necessary. Though you are in love with Miss Hastings, I suppose, you do not expect Miss Hastings to be in love with you, without knowing any thing about the matter; or that she should throw herself at your feet, when you ought to be at hers? I doubt, if she did, if you would love her half so well. Consider, she is one of those

‘Who would be woo'd, and not unsought be won.’”

“O!” returned I, “play not with my feelings. If I thought that seeking her would find her—find her what I wish—how could I ever cease the pursuit till what I wish was crowned?”

“Bravely spoken,” replied the lady; “but depend upon it, to let fall your book in a tremor, for fear of shadows of your own creating, is not the way to succeed.”

“May I look upon this as encouragement?”

“If by that word you wish to ask if I know any thing of my friend’s heart towards you, in the first place, let me say that if I did I would not tell you; but, in the next, let me say I do not. That she esteems you—thanks you—wishes you happy, as her father does too—and thinks you read Otway charmingly—is certain. Beyond this I know nothing.”

“Can you then tell me nothing *favourable* to my hopes?”—
“No.”

“Am I to despair?”—“No.”

“Would you have me to propose this instant?”—“No.”

“Alas! then what am I to do?”—“Go on; but let no more books fall in a fright.”

Thus did this dear lady, I will not say amuse herself by playing with my feelings, but (perhaps without intending it) tantalize me with alternate encouragement and depression, for so I considered this conversation.

She wound it up with a strange ironical request, which her own happy spirits on her approaching nuptials, I suppose, prompted, that I would put into writing, and present to Bertha, a statement of the particular beauty of person or mind for which I so loved her; and, as I seemed so afraid of presenting such a thing myself, she said she would be my ambassadress, and present it for me.

I received this, as it was proposed, jestingly; but having only that moment laid down the poems I had been reading, I took them up again and said,

“Sedley shall answer for me, for I agree with him in every one of these lines, only changing the name of Chloris for Bertha.

‘Chloris, I cannot say your *eyes*
Did my unwary heart surprise;
Nor will I swear it was your *face*,
Your *shape*, or any nameless *grace*;
For you are so *entirely* fair,
To love a *part*, injustice were.
No drowning man can know which drop
Of water his last breath did stop;
So when the stars in heav’n appear,
And join to make the night look clear;
The light we no *one’s* bounty call,
But the obliging gift of all.

‘He that does lips or hands adore,
Deserves *them* only, and no more;

But I love *all*, and every part,
And nothing less can ease my heart.
Cupid *that* lover weakly strikes,
Who can express what 'tis he likes.' "

"Upon my word," said the lady, "you shew yourself a promising pupil of your master, Granville. I don't think *he* could have answered better. But give me the book, for the lines are very pretty, and I must shew them to him."

At that moment he joined us, but only to take his mistress away with him to billiards. Oh! how I envied him!

How did that envy increase as time advanced, though envy is not the proper name for it, for I seriously rejoiced. His position, however, made my own more restless, and it seemed unreasonable, nay, almost unnatural, that I should not feel the same contentment that he did.

His betrothed looked handsomer every hour, as *the* hour approached; handsomer as her consciousness increased. Yet at one time, instead of being, as she generally was, radiant with smiles, I found her in tears—Granville by her side.

Mr. Hastings and Bertha were taking their morning's drive, and I had settled, by way of a ride, to go to York, though it did not take place. They were in the music-room, thinking they should be alone, when I interrupted them.

I quickly retired, lost in wonder at what could have occasioned the emotions I witnessed. At first I thought they had had a quarrel (such things have happened), and a lovers' quarrel is proverbial. Yet they seemed the tears of extreme tenderness, not of bitterness; and Granville, who told it me, lest I should misconstrue them, said they were really so.

In fact, as the day approached when this charming woman was to give herself up to another, the remembrance of her first lord occupied her mind almost to absorption. He had always loved her so devotedly, and with such perfection of esteem, that she had begun to tremble with fear that the step she was about to take might be deemed ungrateful to his memory. Granville's tender attentions, too, increasing as the day of his happiness drew nigh, her fears and conscious associations also augmented; and though far from repenting, still farther from retracting, the recollection of the tenderness of him who first possessed her love, mixed something like compunctious doubts as to the strict propriety of her present conduct, with the softness of her remembrance of the past.

This she ingenuously owned to Granville, together with all she had felt of former happiness with Lord Hungerford.

"Yes," said she, "though greatly older than myself, I loved him, not only with all the devotion of the respect he commanded

from every one, but even with all the fondness he could himself desire. His mind and his heart were both young, and his inestimable worth heightened my feelings into real passion. You must not expect more, therefore, from me than I gave to him. Though the eight years that have passed since he was lost to me have allayed the poignancy of grief, and though I have admitted you to my heart, it is impossible that I can displace him from it, or cease to love his memory. If I thought, therefore, he could now look down upon me with displeasure, for being able to love you, the heart I give you would be a desolate one."

"Here," said Granville, "she was so overcome as to produce those emotions in which you surprised us. Truth is, we neither of us had ever thought of discussing the question of second marriages; I, from being too happy to make any question about it; she, from the perpetual example of the world, till awakened by the near approach of the ceremony, and its association with his memory, who had so entirely possessed her esteem and affection. For my own part," concluded Granville, "I only honoured her, nay, loved her more and more for it; and when she uttered something like an excuse, and a hope that this overtake would not hurt me, I told her with a full heart that she only raised herself higher than ever with me, as it did myself in my own mind, for having been able to win the affection of so sweet a character. With this she was satisfied, and we are better friends than ever."

I was quite penetrated by this account, and regarded Lady Hungerford with even more than usual admiration. That one so superior to almost all her sex in every thing that the world deemed desirable—brilliant, elegant, full of rich talent, and with almost a masculine understanding, formed for public display—should in reality possess also the soft and feminine graces that so charm us in private life, moved my wonder, and more than ever excited my attachment. I could only more than ever congratulate my friend on his good fortune.

Nothing remarkable passed during the rest of the day, except the finishing of *Venice Preserved*, which, though moving both for horrors and for tenderness, yet as they did not draw forth any thing that bore upon my own case, I pass them.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

DISCOURSE WITH BERTHA ON CONJUGAL DUTY.—BEAUTIFUL AND JUST, BUT NOT BLUE.

My noble father!

I do perceive here a divided duty.

SHAKESPEARE.—*Othello*.

ONE only day now remained, before the fates of Granville and that admirable woman, whose winning qualities I have so often described, were to be united. The day was spent in pleasing, yet awful, and in some respects sorrowful, preparation; pleasing and awful to the parties most concerned, who were to leave Foljambe from the church door; sorrowful to those who staid behind.

Granville and Lady Hungerford, as may be supposed, were occupied with one another, at least, as much as their gentleman and lady of the bed-chamber would permit them. These, in arranging matters both for the ceremony and their departure afterwards, seemed by far the principal characters in the drama; but for myself, the chief incident of the morning was another reading in Mr. Hastings' apartments. Here, forgetting my preceding disaster, I was requested again to be the lecturer.

The story of poor Belvidera having been finished, Bertha had selected another, which she said she was particularly fond of, and begged me to recite the struggles of Imogen on parting with her husband Posthumus, banished for having married her.

Here was another clandestine match, as well as *mésalliance*; and though the choice was evidently fortuitous, I could not help wondering at my being fated a second time, and so soon, to plunge into scenes so illustrative of my own particular feelings.

Though the king (Cymbeline) had bred up Posthumus in his court, "made him of his bed-chamber, and "put upon him all the learning of his time," in which Imogen seems to have been his approved companion, no sooner were they married than the king hates his daughter.

I own I felt much, and looked keenly at Mr. Hastings, when in his first speech of reproach, Cymbeline calls her a '*disloyal thing*,' that should repair his youth, but had heaped a year's age upon him.

"It seems to have been his own fault," said Mr. Hastings; "for, from what I know of the play, he countenanced the intimacy between his daughter and Posthumus."

“ You will find that he did so,” said Bertha ; “ and being so accomplished as was her husband, I like her firmness in asserting his superiority to all others, however great.”

Upon this I went on, and read—

“ Thou might'st have had the sole son of my queen.”

“ O! blest that I might not! I chose an eagle,
And did avoid a puttock.”

“ I think,” said Mr. Hastings to Bertha, and handling his snuff-box pretty briskly (as he always did when some stirring thought occurred)—“ I think if you were Imogen I could give a name to that puttock ; but for the eagle I am at a loss.”

Bertha's cheek was instantly suffused with crimson ; and as neither Mansell nor the prince any longer made her uneasy, I could not tell why. She answered her father, however, by playfully saying, that he ought not to be guilty of personal applications, and begged me to go on. I did so with—

“ Thou took'st a beggar ;
Would'st have my throne a seat for laziness.”

“ No ; I rather added a lustre to it.”

“ Sir,
It is *your* fault that I have loved Posthumus,
You bred him as my play-fellow, and he is
A man worth any woman ; over-buys me
Almost the sum he pays.”

Here again Mr. Hastings began to comment :—“ Aye,” said he, “ here was the great mistake. Cymbeline gave his daughter a play-fellow, one whom he himself had done all he could to make amiable, and then hates her for loving him.”

“ I knew, dear Sir,” replied Bertha, “ you would think her excusable for loving him, and I think so too, but not for marrying him without her father's consent.”

“ That is a good creed for all daughters,” observed Mr. Hastings ; “ mind you always act up to it.”

“ I trust I shall, Sir,” answered Bertha ; and from having been easy and almost playful, she became unusually pensive.

I began not to relish the conversation, and went on with the dialogue.

“ What ! art thou mad ? ”

“ Almost, Sir.—Heaven restore me ! Would I were
A neatherd's daughter, and my Leonatus
Our neighbour shepherd's son.”

“ This is downright rebellion,” said Mr. Hastings.

“ But it is most pathetic,” observed Bertha, “ and tells a thousand affecting things. A princess to be so disinterested, and humble ; though to be sure so noble a husband as Leonatus justified her.”

“ And yet,” remarked her father, “ you would no more, I am sure, bid defiance to your parent, than you would throw away your rank in society for the noblest-minded husband.”

“ I am not sure,” replied Bertha, “ if you had bred me up with him, and made him my play-fellow, like Posthumus.”

“ It would destroy all distinction,” said Mr. Hastings, “ and let in the levellers with a vengeance.”

“ With submission,” said I, “ Shakspeare, by this, did not mean that Imogen, *being a princess*, would have *become* a mere peasant for the sake of living with Posthumus ; but that she would prefer to have been *born* in a peasant’s rank, with a husband she loved, to being the daughter of a king with one she detested.”

“ I think Mr. De Clifford has well explained,” said Bertha.

“ Perhaps he has,” answered Mr. Hastings, “ and no doubt you agree in the explanation.”

“ That I certainly do,” replied she.

“ I cannot blame you,” said her father ; “ but being not a neatherd’s daughter, but a gentlewoman, I have no fear of any neighbour shepherd’s son.”

The conversation here, I thought, had become too grave, and I did not much like the turn it had taken. I was not ill pleased, therefore, when Mr. Hastings said,

“ I do not much admire these *unequal* matches, nor yet more, where the old greybeards of fathers are, as usual, brought in growling at their daughters for making them. Priuli was bad enough, and Cymbeline is worse. Give me something more sunshiny—a scene where the choice and the happiness of the parties are equal and mutual, and not leavened by any querulous, peevish papa.”

“ You at least, dear Sir,” said Bertha, “ cannot be afraid of such a character ; but I own the result of poor Imogen’s marriage is rather too affecting for the day before the bridal morn of our dear friends. There should be none but joyful nuptials in the moment of theirs. Perhaps Mr. De Clifford will find us something more appropriate.”

“ With all my heart,” said Mr. Hastings.

I immediately laid the book down, and took up another volume of the bard, in which seeing *The Merchant of Venice*, I was struck with the wish of presenting the beautiful character of Portia to Bertha ; not, indeed, as a specimen of her own modest and lovely feminineness, but as an example of the strong sense and decision, mixed with softness, and conjugal attachment, which often distinguishes the sex. Portia, as well as Bertha, had been bound

by a promise to her father regarding her marriage, which, like Bertha, she was prepared to fulfil, though to her own risk. She, too, with all her energy, had notions, the description of which delights the heart, in respect to the relations of a wife to a husband.

With this view I passed cursorily through the previous scenes till I came to Bassanio's arrival at Belmont, and the instant interest kindled by him in the bosom of Portia. Here I watched the mind of Bertha as it was developed in her manner of feeling and judging of the event. Portia is so afraid of losing Bassanio, as she must do if he chooses the wrong casket, that, with a sweet touch of nature, she begs him to delay the ceremony of choosing :—

“ I pray you, tarry ; pause a day or two,
Before you hazard ; for in choosing wrong,
I lose your company ; therefore forbear a-while ;
There's something tells me—(*but it is not love*)—
I would not lose you ; and you know yourself,
Hate counsels not in such a quality.
But lest you should not understand me well
(*And yet a maiden hath no tongue but thought*),
I would detain you here some month or two,
Before you venture for me.”

“A pretty bold declaration, and honest withal, for a young lady,” observed Mr. Hastings. “What says Bertha?”

“Far too bold,” answered Bertha, “for one who says,

‘A maiden should have no tongue but thought.’”

“I concluded you would say so,” I observed ; “for no young English lady would have so produced herself. But you are to recollect she was an Italian who said it, and not only so, but a great heiress, and almost a queen (indeed, represented as a sovereign in the original novel), and called upon to act and decide for herself in a situation of great publicity, as well as difficulty. She might have been even Amazonian, and not thus out of nature ; and 'tis therefore that the real sweetness, and even humbleness, which we afterwards see belonging to her, please us so much.”

“Let us have the passages,” said Mr. Hastings ; “I know she redeems herself.”

I immediately turned to the delightful, dignified, yet modest account of her feelings to Bassanio, on the occasion of his successful choice :—

“You see me, Lord Bassanio, where I stand,
Such as I am. Though for myself alone,
I would not be ambitious in my wish
To wish myself much better ; yet for you,
I would be trebled twenty times myself ;
A thousand times more fair—ten thousand times

More rich. But the full sum of me
 Is an unlessoned girl, unschooled, unpractised;
 Happy in this, she is not yet so old
 But she may learn; and happier in this,
 She is not bred so dull but she *can* learn:
 Happiest of all is, that her gentle spirit
 Commits itself to yours to be directed,
 As from her lord, her governor, and king."

Here breaking off, I could not help saying, that whether as to the sentiment, or the interest it created for the speaker, I thought it among the most beautiful things in Shakspeare.

"One feels it in one's very heart," observed Bertha, who during the whole of these interesting lines marked in the various changes of her complexion, and in every turn of her features, the effect they had upon her head and heart. Her lips, though not audible, shewed by their motion that she was repeating every word within herself; and when I had finished, the words "charming! she has indeed redeemed herself," escaped, though in a subdued voice, from her evidently o'er-fraught bosom; and though she *said* no more, she completely, by the beaming intelligence of her eye, seconded her father when he said,

"A noble girl! I retract all I said of her forwardness; she has all the softness, with none of the violence, of Imogen."

"She is, indeed, a heroine," continued Bertha, after a little silent meditation, as if recalling the succeeding scenes; "but a soft, as well as an energetic one; and when I think of the accomplishments of her husband, and that all that she afterwards so boldly did, was to relieve his affectionate heart from the insupportable woe of thinking he had destroyed his friend, I can forgive, nay, even admire, her man's attire."

"I believe you, dearest," said Mr. Hastings; "you would do it even for your father, were he in the same situation."

"It would not be the will that would be wanting," returned Bertha, looking fondly at her parent.

"I believe you there, too, my child," said Mr. Hastings, returning all the fondness of her looks, "for I verily think you would do as much for a father as a husband."

"As I am not married," observed she, half smiling, half seriously, "the experiment luckily cannot be made; if I were, I would only pray that I might never be put to the trial; for though, perhaps, I might be an Imogen, I could not be Belvidera."

"And why not?" asked her parent.

"Belvidera, you know, was the *darling* of her father's age; and yet she left him 'in the dead of night.' That—whether in day or night—I could not do, whatever the merit of him who sought me

Indeed, the proposal to do so—wronging his benefactor on the tenderest point, when under such obligations to him—would have lowered my opinions of Jaffier, and rather turned me from him. This, and his weakness all through the play, cause a break in the interest, terrible as it is ; and I almost *love*, as well as esteem, Pierre, better than his friend.”

How did I not hang on all this ! How intensely did I not wish her to go on, when colouring, as if she was going too far in hazarding a critical opinion, she paused and stopped. Oh, how does not the retiring modesty of a woman enhance the beauty and expression of her sentiments, whatever their justness or rectitude !

“ Why does my dear Bertha pause ? ” said Mr. Hastings, to my great pleasure. “ Why does she not go on, and tell us her reason for preferring Imogen to Belvidera ? ”

“ Cymbeline was a tyrant,” answered Bertha ; “ Priuli, before he was *betrayed*, as I may say, by his daughter, and him he so bountifully protected, the most loving of fathers. His very revenge—so shocking, as to amount almost to madness, and for which he was so dreadfully punished afterwards, by remorse, the severest avenger—proceeded from his absorbing fondness for this child, who left him. But Cymbeline seems to have cared little for his daughter, to whom he had given Posthumus as a play-fellow ; and the attachments of play-fellows are not soon forgotten.”

Here she paused again, and, indeed, seemed much disconcerted, for I own I was devouring her with my eyes, while hers were downcast. Recovering at last, she said,

“ But I believe I had better not play the critic, papa, but leave you and Mr. De Clifford to settle the merits of the two ladies. All that I mean is, that Posthumus, being of a higher character than Jaffier, and Cymbeline less fond of his daughter than Priuli, I perhaps might have imitated Imogen, but not Belvidera.”

“ Then, as to Portia ? ” asked Mr. Hastings, seemingly delighted with her.

“ Oh ! she is altogether beyond me,” replied Bertha, “ almost to understand, much more to imitate. She is the noblest of heroines, and yet the gentlest of women. Her masculine exertions to relieve her husband’s anguish leave us all behind in energy ; yet her profession of what ought to be the feeling of a young creature about to give herself up to the man of her choice,

‘ As to her lord, her governor, and king,’

seems to belong to the most winning softness. I know nothing like it, even in Shakspeare.”

“I love your comments, my child, better than any thing,” said Mr. Hastings.

“Except the commentator?” observed I; and if my looks did not express the delight of my heart, I have neither heart to feel, nor looks to express any thing.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

I AM ALARMED AT A CHANGE IN BERTHA.—THE RESULTS TO WHICH IT LED.

Not so sick, my lord,
As she is troubled with thick-coming fancies.

SHAKESPEARE.—*Macbeth*.

To my astonishment, and probably my reader's too (especially after the last chapter), the next time I saw Bertha exhibited an eclipse of all those lovely beams of pleasure and intelligence which had been prompted by our delightful occupation. At dinner, where I had promised myself the pleasing familiarity which that family meal generally creates, Bertha was distant, timid, and silent, scarcely replying to any thing I directed to her; and her eyes, so far from encountering mine, were for the most part averted.

To me this seemed not less than an eclipse of the sun, which “with fear of change perplexes monarchs.” It was most certain that it thoroughly perplexed *me*. It was in vain I sought to account for it. At first, I thought she might be ill; but her looks forbade that, for never had she looked so well. Yet what had happened? Could she be capricious?—No. Did she wish to try her power?—No. To teaze?—No. To play the coquet?—O no!

I did all I could to bring her round. I tried to talk of Portia—she would not join. I asked questions as to Saxony—she knew nothing about it. Lady Hungerford's plans as an ambassadress—she seemed to have lost all interest in them. Never was there so dull a dinner, and never was I so glad to be released by the withdrawal of the ladies.

Willingly could I have left the table and sought the solitude of the park; but this the etiquette of Mr. Hastings, invalid as he was, forbade. He had engaged, prompted, I suppose, by questions about Germany, and Granville's approaching mission there, to give him a full sketch of its manners and politics immediately after the peace of Aix-la-Chapelle, when he began his travels, which ended in the

Saxon alliance. There was no stirring till this was over, when we were summoned to coffee in the drawing-room.

Alas ! here I found Bertha, though less distant, and almost striving to be civil, still absent, and far from giving me that frank look of amity, denoting the full intercourse of mind and thought, which had lately so delighted me. On the contrary, she seemed under constraint, and flying to Lady Hungerford, as it were for protection, on my approach.

I felt depressed, but for what reason I could not divine, and was not the happier because I knew her superior both to coquetry and caprice.

Her change was still more marked when, according to custom, music was proposed. It was not that she objected ; on the contrary, though she declared against singing, she hastened to look out some instrumental duets ; but when Lady Hungerford and Granville proposed vocal music, she opposed it still more, observing she was not equal to it. It was only when Lady Hungerford declared it would be their last vocal treat, perhaps for years, that she yielded, and selected an air of Zingarelli.

“ It is beautiful,” said Lady Hungerford ; “ but, on leaving Foljambe and Yorkshire, and Mr. Granville and Mr. De Clifford on almost the very spot where they composed it, I wish to hear once more that joint production of theirs which you used *once* to like, and sung so well—the stanzas to Hopeless Love.”

To my disappointment and dismay, Bertha made a thousand excuses. She had neither voice nor spirits ; which Granville said was very affronting ; while I, for my part, stood aloof, wondering what all this could mean, yet thinking it bad taste, as well as being afraid, to add my entreaty to the others.

While doubtful of success, however, Mr. Hastings himself came to the aid of the petitioners, saying it was ungracious to refuse while both author and composer were at her elbow ; and observing how he liked the air, and that he had not heard it for a long time, Bertha could no longer withstand what it absolutely puzzled as well as grieved me to think she had so long resisted. That it was personal to myself or Granville, I could not believe ; yet a sort of confusion in her manner, while evading the request, added to the perplexity which her demeanour had occasioned.

In this awkward way (for so I may call it) the stanzas commenced ; but soon all awkwardness fled, and was forgotten in the exquisite pathos of the air, and the feeling which this sweet daughter of harmony could not help infusing into it. We were all breathless while the performance went on, and when it was over, Granville said she had made him in love with his own composition ; to which, rallying, she answered, that was no compliment—it was so easy to

do so. But when Lady Hungerford was pleased to approve, and began to read some of the stanzas, she was actually confused, and looked embarrassed.

All was enigma to me, and not a pleasant one; yet the composition, and the heightened beauty of the syren, with the justice she did to it, penetrated me to my inmost feeling. Still I said nothing, till Mr. Hastings, who had wheeled his chair close to the instrument, roused me by observing,

“Why, you are not so frank as Granville; you won’t confess the pleasure you must feel in the performance of a composition in which you had so great a share.”

To this I replied what I sincerely felt, that I thought so much more of the performance than the composition, that I had forgot who were the composers.

At this I observed Bertha looked down, and seemed again embarrassed, from which she was not relieved by what passed on my remarking that I never felt some of Waller’s most beautiful lines brought so home to me.

“O! pray let us have them,” said Lady Hungerford; “I like Waller’s little turns. I suppose they were to Sacharissa?”

“If Chloris was Sacharissa,” I replied, “they were; but they are entitled only ‘To a lady singing one of his own compositions.’”

But here I stopped for a moment, for at the name of Chloris I observed the confusion, if I may so call it, of Bertha increase; she even blushed “celestial, rosy red,” and Lady Hungerford gave her a significant look, while, almost to relieve her, she begged me to give them the lines I had mentioned. They were these:—

“Chloris, yourself you so excel,
When you vouchsafe to breathe my thoughts,
That like a spirit, with a spell
Of my own teaching I am caught.

“That eagle’s fate and mine are one,
Who on the shaft that made him die
Espied a feather of his own,
Wherewith he wont to soar so high.”

“Charming!” cried Lady Hungerford. “Ingenious Waller!”

“Ingenious Clifford, I think,” said Granville; “what says *ma petite cousine*?”

And he added in terms to Bertha, that she ought to thank me; which put me rather upon the *qui vive*. Nor was I less so at the reply, when she said,

“I have, indeed, much to thank Mr. De Clifford for, and upon this occasion I can only say that he was always very refined in his compliments, and fully keeps up his reputation.”

After this she relapsed into deep pensiveness, which lasted till she retired for the night, when she accompanied Lady Hungerford to her chamber.

What her last words portended, whether they signified approbation or tacit chiding, whether pleasure or displeasure at my allusion, I could by no means make out. I hoped the first, I feared the last; but the hopes and fears of lovers are too little reducible to reason to be understood, and my conjectures were endless during the night, both as to this, and still more as to the change of manner which had given me such uneasiness.

If not comforted, I was at least relieved from uncertainty the next morning after breakfast, by Granville. Lady Hungerford, it seems, had seen both this change in Bertha, and my dismay at it, and (kind and considerate woman!) had commissioned Granville to explain to me what she thought the cause, as also to beg my forgiveness for having perhaps been the occasion of it.

In short, whether by way of experimenting on the question (which she now owned she had so much at heart), or sheerly in a careless conversational mood, she had informed Bertha of the manner in which, after rallying me on my evident feelings, she had drawn from me the sonnet of Sir Charles Sedley, addressed to Chloris.

“This,” said Granville, “had filled Bertha with consternation, and alarmed her delicacy so much, that she feared to engage with you as usual, nay, avoided you, as you saw, and felt particularly unwilling to sing what would so strongly remind you of past scenes.”

“She wished those scenes then to be forgotten?” observed I.

“I did not gather that,” answered Granville; “but as the remembrance of them seemed called up by herself if she sang the air in question, and coming so immediately after your application of Sedley’s lines to her, it filled her with fears, which your own sense of a young woman’s delicacy may very well comprehend.”

“Well, indeed, can I comprehend,” said I, “any thing that connects delicacy with Bertha, and if this were all, I should be satisfied; but I fear I am here ‘paltered with in a double sense:’ this anxiety for the preservation of delicacy augurs little for my hopes of favour in another sense, if it does not extinguish them. Am I to understand that her freedom of manner, which so charmed me, can only be restored by her being relieved from all fear of being addressed by me as a lover? If so, I will only pray you to take me back with you to London after the ceremony, or afterwards to Germany; for I shall feel a second time banished from this too interesting place, where indeed I was not wise to hazard myself again.”

“Do not talk thus,” replied Granville, “for it will deeply hurt Honora, who, as it is, feels that she has not dealt discreetly by you,

in revealing whatever was to be revealed by this unfortunate sonnet of Sedley's. She certainly thought it might elicit something of encouragement for you, or she would not have ventured it."

"In which," said I (I fear rather testily), "it seems she did not succeed."

"Bertha was too much alarmed," returned Granville, "to be thoroughly understood, and this alarm, though it indicate nothing certain as to success, is, I think, any thing but discouraging. It indeed cuts both ways, but it shews no indifference, which you yourself once told me was the last thing a lover ought to wish to encounter."

"According to you, then," said I, "if she sedulously avoided me, and never spoke to me again, it would be encouragement."

He laughed, but said it was at least not so discouraging as a cold politeness. "However," added he, "the ladies are again closeted, and will be so for some time, as it is not yet Mr. Hastings' hour for appearing; and if you can calm yourself in the meanwhile, till they re-appear, as I have ten thousand things to do preparatory for to-morrow, and must therefore leave you, I would advise you to do so."

CHAPTER XXXIX.

CONFERENCES WITH LADY HUNGERFORD AND GRANVILLE, PROMISING TO LEAD TO THE CONSUMMATION OF MY OBJECT.

'Tis a consummation devoutly to be wished.

SHAKESPEARE.—*Hamlet*.

What say you, Hermia? Be advised, fair maid;
Demetrius is a worthy gentleman.

Midsommer Night's Dream.

It is very easy for a man, the day before his marriage with the woman of his heart, and all his most favourite prospects in the world opening upon him to boot, to desire another, who is upon tenterhooks, to *calm* himself.

This was my reflection when the happy Granville left me alone to my sorry fancies, while he went to order the ten thousand things necessary for the happy business of the succeeding day.

Meantime I paced for ten weary minutes the eating-room where we had breakfasted; then sallied out and did as much by the hall; then went half-way up stairs, listened, and came down again, all to

no purpose. I wondered what the ladies were about; why ladies had so many secrets who had been nearly a month together; why these had any secrets at all, now that one had parted with her lover, and the other was so soon to take a husband. Above all, I wondered why they should prefer being alone, when a young gentleman was waiting below longing to walk and talk with them.

These movements and reflections of mine, however, did not bring them down, and to vary the scene I walked into the flower-garden. There, looking up to the window of Bertha's *boudoir*, I saw Lady Hungerford affectionately embracing her, both ladies, as far I could make out, a good deal agitated. "*Chère petite maman*," said I; "she is fondly taking her last leave of her in private;" and for fear of intruding upon their notice, I walked away.

I took several turns, but still they had not descended; and though I knew not why, in so very simple and very usual a matter as a *tête à tête* between two friends, I wondered that this conference should last so long. It seemed as if it never would have an end.

It was not till I was returning to the house, full half-an-hour after I had left it, that I beheld Bertha through the door-way, crossing the hall to her father's room, and Lady Hungerford presently advancing down the steps as if to meet me. She seemed full of meaning, both in her countenance and action, and said rather gaily,

"As I have lost my knight, I must put up with my squire, as a lady of my consequence cannot take the air unattended, and I want air."

I told her, with as much sincerity as gallantry, that there was no service that could be imposed upon me so agreeable, and that I rejoiced that Granville was so occupied that I might for a moment be lord in waiting in his room.

"O!" said she, "never mind him till to-morrow; the remainder of this day I give to you, as I already have the beginning of it. I have much to tell you, and I think we must adjourn to the summer-house, which has always been to you so eventful."

I was up in arms in an instant, for I saw there was something important on her mind, which, after this long conference with her friend, I thought portended something of no mean consequence; and I would have hurried her to the spot she had appointed, but for my respect, and that she protested she would take her own time and her own way in every thing she had to say. I saw there was nothing left for it but to obey, and allowed her, teasingly, as I thought, for it was very slowly, to lead the way to the ominous place.

"The arms of Saxony!" said she, as, on entering, she looked at the pediment over the door; "and the prince of Saxony!" as she looked at the print over the chimney-piece. "Well, luckily for you, and unluckily for him, that it is all done away with. But, let

me see, I perceive not Mansell here, nor Melford; she should have had them, if only to keep them in remembrance, or look at them as trophies."

"Dear, dear Madam," cried I, "what is all this? Have you led me here to sport with me, after laying me on the rack? It is not like you. For heaven's sake, relieve me—let me not die in ignorance."

"I allow," said she, more seriously and most kindly, "you have some reason to complain; but, believe me, I am not sporting with you; I am only not quite certain how to begin, for I am almost astounded myself with wonder. Season, however, your admiration for a while; let me recollect myself, and I will endeavour methodically to tell you, that I think I see sunshine through the cloud; though in the first instance I have to throw myself on your mercy, for I have betrayed you."

"And is that all?" cried I, much disappointed. "Those foolish verses of Sir Charles were not worth being kept a secret. Granville has just unravelled that mystery. Be assured, dear lady, you are completely pardoned, if such a word can be applied from me to you, and more especially for such a thing."

"Has Mr. Granville then told you no more? Has he related nothing that passed between him and his uncle yesterday?"

"Not a syllable."

"I find, then," continued Lady Hungerford, "I have more to do than I thought; though, if you know Mr. Hastings, you must have seen that you are no common person in his estimation."

"To his civilities, nay, I trust I may add, his friendship," returned I, "I must ever be alive; but I have observed no more."

"See what it is to be modest," replied the lady. "I tell you that his estimation of you is not a common one; nay, *for him*, it is a most *uncommon* one. He leaned much to you for your conduct to his son, and from feeling the injustice of that son's conduct to you. You won his heart afterwards by your attentions to him on occasion of the terrible catastrophe of poor Foljambe's death; and though your unfortunate delirium made separation necessary, still he regretted your loss as a companion, and followed your progress in the world with interest. But the vivid attachment you shewed for his honour, and that of his darling, heightened a hundred-fold, he said, from the cold treatment you had met with from them, and supported by such gallantry, under such danger, wound up the whole, and he affirmed to Mr. Granville (an amazing admission for *him*), that he loved you as a son."

I was delighted, as may be supposed, to hear all this; but, not in the least knowing what it tended to,

"My dearest Madam," said I, "for pity's sake, tell me to what,

if any thing, this intimation can lead. Flattering and pleasing as it must be to be so thought of by any one, but particularly by Mr. Hastings, that it will advance me one inch to the fondest object of my life, I do not see."

"Then, you are less clear-sighted than I thought," answered the lady; "for do you not see from Bertha's whole character, that before she could permit her heart to have the semblance of a feeling such as you covet, she must be fortified by the certainty that it would be approved by the parent she adores?"

"Yes, dear lady," said I; "no one can see the father and daughter together, but must be convinced of that. Her devotion of herself to the maintenance of his honour with the prince would alone prove it, even if I had not witnessed it in all those beautiful sentiments of filial piety which our little readings have recently elicited. But of what avail is it to me that her father thinks well of me; nay, even (if that could be known) that he would not reject me as a son-in-law, unless I had made far more way than I feel I have, where almost alone it is of consequence? Witness the strangeness of her altered tone and distant manner upon a mere and most uncertain hint of my feelings towards her, so recently as last night."

Lady Hungerford here seemed a little conscious of something she knew not how to explain, and paused long before she replied. She seemed to be seeking for the proper answer, looked round the room, and adjusted parts of her dress. At length, with a heightened colour, and some hesitation, she said,

"I was ever a bad one at what may be called management. I am unable to dissemble if I would, and own myself a little entangled. Fear of compromising both your friend Granville and myself, perhaps I may also say Mr. Hastings and his daughter, induced me to attempt what is generally dangerous, and never honest, a half confidence. The straightest way, therefore, is to make up for it by an unreserved frankness, and to confess that, urged by our entire and warmest wishes for your success, we could not leave either you or this dear family (especially on the eve of our departure from all of you for some years), plunged, as you seem to be, in endless uncertainties upon the tenderest, as well as the most important question that can be agitated, and not make an effort to extricate you. You have yourself often said that absolute rejection was better than suspense; yet, whether from modesty or hopelessness, you have taken no measures to put an end to suspense; nor could I myself know how to counsel you till within these four-and-twenty hours, when, from what fell in Mr. Granville's conference with his uncle, and mine with my dearest Bertha, I resolved not to risk a failure of your consent by consulting you, but to disclose all I knew at once. In a word, my betrayal of you has gone much farther than the mere

gallantry of the verses to Chloris. Reproach me, if you please, but forgive me if you can, for I have disclosed your whole secret, and Bertha knows how much, how long, and with what constancy you have loved her."

It is not easy to say how I received this startling intelligence. The crisis of my fate was thus brought home, in a manner indeed most kindly meant by the person in the world whom I most considered and admired, and who only honoured me by the interest she took in me; but not the less was it a crisis, fraught with happiness or misery. I felt all its importance, and all its danger—that I was walking on ground mined underneath, and that a few minutes, nay, another word from Lady Hungerford, might overthrow my whole scheme and hope of happiness, and send me for ever into distant banishment.

My anxiety may be imagined, nay, was depicted in my face to such a degree, that Lady Hungerford was alarmed, and was forced, she said, to smile more perhaps than was warrantable, in order to keep me at peace with myself, to say nothing of her.

"Come," said she, "I see I have summoned up all the constitutional agonies that make such a havoc with your heart whenever it is affected. Do you know you will never make a great man, and least of all, a great statesman, whose first quality is either to be without feeling, or to disguise if he have it, so as it can never be discovered. You might at least have waited till your death-warrant, was signed before you became so terrified. This is not yet the fact; and though I cannot tell, with any certainty, what *is*, I can tell you that Bertha has long thought of and valued you as a brother, which, for the present, ought to content you."

"Ah!" said I, "how much may or may not be in that '*at present*?' and how tame——"

"For a lover," interrupted Lady Hungerford, "to be ranked only as a brother. Are you, then, one of those ardent spirits which value only that sort of love that takes and shews fire like touch-wood, and of course burns out soon? I should rather have thought that the pupil of Mr. Fothergill and Mr. Manners would have preferred (as, be assured, experience will prove to you that you ought to prefer) the affection which is the gentle and quiet growth of deep-seated esteem. Such, I may say, is what at this moment actuates me to take the awful step which is about to decide the cast of my life; and such, I will venture to predict, if you do not throw it away, may in time produce all you wish in her of whom you have so long thought, and so long despaired. But, I cry you mercy!" continued she in an altered tone, seeing that I was not so overjoyed as she expected. "You think, perhaps, that this sort of love, even if it exist (which I know not that it yet does), is of too cold and slow

a growth. You gentlemen enthusiasts would only value a mistress who would, on a moment's warning, be ready at a window with a ladder of ropes. This is not Bertha's character, who, however I could please, and excite, perhaps sport with you, by telling you how she received the intelligence I gave her of your attachment——"

"Ah! Madam!" said I, "if you would make me your slave for the rest of my life, stop not here; but tell me."

"Very good," said she; "but as you are to be Bertha's slave, not mine, this will be no inducement. At any rate, it would disappoint you; for it was not half vehement enough. There were no tears; no hysterics; not even a tremor—a few blushes indeed."

"O!" cried I, seeing her stop again; "keep your word—do not sport with me, but go on."

"It is because I will not sport with you, that I am thus plain in my recital. Miss Hastings, with all her vivacity, all her softness of feeling, is, as I told you, no enthusiast. It is quite sufficient for you that she seemed any thing but sorry for the news I gave her, and allowed you were the man in the world whom from childhood she had most esteemed."

"Delightful! Amiable Bertha!" cried I, and was going on, when Lady Hungerford interrupted me.

"Be not too soon elate," she added; "for, notwithstanding this, she would not allow her feelings to exceed their present tranquil state."

"Tranquil state! Are they then so tranquil?"

"They are, and ought to be; and if your own were so too, and you had given me time to finish, I would have added—until the whole matter was laid before her father; and if he did not oppose, she would then——"

"Ah!—what?"

"Consider."

"O Heavens!—consider! What, no more?—not, even with her father's consent, more than consider?"

"And enough, too. Surely you could not expect her even to consider whether she should accept an offer or not, before she knew her father's opinion?"

"True! true! I had forgot that."

"Well, then, I think I have, upon the whole, done you eminent service, and you will not only forgive, but feel obliged to me. Be assured I have, since last night, brought you a mile nearer to your object than you would have brought yourself in the next twelve months; and you may thank my own situation—about to leave both you and Bertha for a long and indefinite time (you irresolute; Bertha ignorant; both of you without a common friend)—for prompting me to so critical a proceeding."

It may be supposed how gratefully I expressed myself for this kindness, as well as how full of admiration I was at such energy. Certainly, this exquisite woman was, in both, the wonder of her sex.

“Now one thing more,” added she, “before we break up this conference. There must be no disguises, no acting of parts, between you hereafter. She indeed is above it, and you too, but for what I cannot altogether blame, a sense of old inferiority, which, though only worldly, does not any longer even exist. You now know each other’s position. She—that you love, and seek permission to woo her; you—that she at least esteems you more than other men. I will not conceal from you that, if her father is favourable, I look for this esteem as likely to ripen into something much warmer, nay, as warm as you can wish; but you must have patience, for the contrary may ruin you.”

How did my heart leap at this! But could I help asking if she had any *particular* reason for it?

“None, be assured,” said she, “except from common observation; so do not (odd compound as you are of sanguineness and fear—of confidence and despair) imagine that any thing specific has passed between us. My surmise is the result of mere ordinary penetration; for no unsophisticated young woman would have given that consequence which her changed behaviour to you intimated last evening, upon the incident of the verses, unless something more than common played round her heart. But we loiter here, when we have but a few hours left, which ought to be given to action. By we, I mean Mr. Granville as well as myself; I believe he is at this moment with his uncle, watching opportunity; for I own the only thing wanting to my own happiness is to leave that of two persons whom I so much regard, in a way to be realized. So, for a time, farewell. No thanks, for I cannot stay to receive them.”

At this she flew off, leaving me in Bertha’s hermitage, which appeared now, more than ever, the temple of purity and love. Here my heart and mind felt in a wilderness of thought and feeling, from which I did not, for a very long time, awaken.

When I did, I staggered towards the house, when I met Granville, who was coming in quest of me. He instantly seized my arm, and hurrying me into that walk in which, remarkably, near three years before, he had so emphatically urged the necessity for my renouncing all my feelings for Bertha, he there congratulated me on the prospect which he said he thought had now opened in my favour.

“Both Honora and I,” said he, “have been at work for you. I know what has passed between you, and that she acquainted you with the critical importance which might result from the interview

I have just had with my uncle. Not to torture you, therefore, with suspense, I think I may say it has been decidedly favourable, and at once give you joy."

At these words the dear fellow flew into my arms, as I did into his, and to relieve my impatience he proceeded at once in his story.

"Honora," said he, "informed you that I had gone to Mr. Hastings' apartment to watch an opportunity. I did not do so long, for he almost immediately made one. 'Sit near me, nephew,' said he, 'and talk to me of your approaching happiness. You have ever been a son to me, and more than a son.' At this he sighed deeply, and added, 'how extraordinary—perhaps, I may say, how cruel—my fate, that I should meet with more care and consolation from you, more distant from me in blood, and even from another with whom I have no connection at all, than from him who is gone, though my own flesh and blood!'

"By another, you mean Mr. Clifford, dear Sir," said I, "and I believe you judge rightly of his attachment to you. 'Tis a little hard,' observed he, 'that he, too, must leave me as well as you, and at the same time as you and dear Lady Hungerford. As for me, I shall never see any of you again, and we may as well part now, in a less mournful manner, as six months hence. But what poor Bertha is to do without her friend, the only one she has loved, or allowed herself to love, in the world, is a bitter thought to me. I now perceive how wrong, how selfish—how very selfish I have been, in agreeing to allow her (for it was her own determination, against my better judgment) to immure herself here, in watching the decline of a useless old man. She has not the place that belongs to her in the world, and has laid no ground for it after I am gone. Yet your dear Honora, who was the sister of her infancy, and the friend of her youth, as it ripened, will, I know, not abandon her; but you will be abroad when I am called.'

"Here the old man let fall some anxious tears, which much affected me. I endeavoured to console him, but without much success. 'I have considered the matter,' said he, 'in all its points. God tempers the wind to the shorn lamb, and my child will, I dare say, not want for friends; and, though our rays are diminished, she is still an heiress, and will not want for fortune; but, on account of that very fortune, she may the more want protection; and, above all, her heart will want a partner, for it is a social heart.'

"Here again my good uncle was a little overcome. 'Hitherto,' continued he, 'I have, strange to say, appeared to fill that heart; at least the only one to share it with me was she who has given hers to you. No one who has addressed her ever succeeded in impressing it; and here, again, I am bowed down with self-blame for hav-

ing harassed her with that long engagement, which has only just left her free. It is not that any of those who courted her could have made her happy, except, perhaps, poor, lost Melford, had he turned out differently ; but the engagement was a bar to all, and she voluntarily lived the life of a nun. All this makes me feel our approaching separation the more, and will embitter my final departure ten-fold. To-morrow—to you a day of rejoicing—will to us be one of mourning; and not the less, because the day after will take from us one whom, from the generous attachment he has shewn to our honour, and the interest which he in every thing seems to take in us, we appreciate as he deserves. I shall greatly miss him myself; but when Bertha has lost her *chaperon* and you, I see not how, with propriety, I can ask so young a person to prolong his visit, where she will, of necessity, be almost his only companion.'

"I was meditating what answer to make to this (which indeed was not easy), when, to my surprise, and pleasure too, he went on, as if it had suddenly struck him, 'Ay; if he, or such a one as he, had been among those who addressed her during the engagement with her cousin, what a relief would it have been, now it is over, to all those fears and anxieties I have been expressing to you.'

"I felt, as I have said, surprised, nay, astonished at this. What I had been with so much eagerness and care endeavouring to bring about, exhausting all my forethought and ingenuity to provide against the difficulties that seemed to surround it, appeared here almost settled to my hand, and only to require a word of explanation to complete it.—But, my good friend," added Granville, seeing me here much agitated, "if you cannot bear this communication better, we must stop, or adjourn to yonder bench, or you will certainly be down. You are pale and red, by turns, and seem to have lost your breath—if you are going to lose your senses too, pray give me notice, for it will spare me the rest of my tale."

"O! Granville," said I, "spare raillery; this is not a matter for wit—for heaven's love, go on."

"Can you bear it?" asked he, and made as if he would feel my pulse. "Come, pretty calm again. Well, then, to proceed:—I almost doubted whether I had understood Mr. Hastings to mean seriously what his words implied; to ascertain it I actually observed (forgive me for it)—'With all my esteem and love for Mr. Clifford, I never could have supposed this, knowing that, though he is a gentleman both in birth and education, his family have been so reduced as to be in a very moderate condition.'

"'I care not for their condition,' replied he, with some quickness; 'they are all of them Normans; he is himself now owner of the identical castle of his ancestors, the ancient barons; and my creed, you know, is, that the blood of a gentleman can never be

washed out. But, far beyond this, he has given proofs of the nobleness of his nature, as well as of his family, in his generous devotion of himself towards us, spite, not only of appalling danger, but of affronting and ungrateful slights on our parts. In this too he seemed the instrument of the vengeance of heaven upon the murderer of my poor boy. But why waste words upon this part of the subject? The question will never arise. I see no signs of it on either side. The wanderings of a youth in a delirium from a fever were nothing, and ought not to have been noticed. What I admire in him is, his gratuitous attention to us since, and the gallant hazard he ran in defence of our good name, without any other possible motive than a generous desire to vindicate our honour. No, no. It will be time enough to talk of objections, when something more appears than the mere friendliness of childhood, which is renewed between him and Bertha.'

" 'Uncle,' said I, 'will you let me express an opinion upon this?'

" 'Willingly, my dear nephew,' replied he.

" 'Then forgive me, if I think differently from you, and with good ground, in regard to his feelings towards Bertha. Shall I even confess to you that I know that for years, nay, from the first moment he saw her, his heart has been entirely hers, with a devotion almost without example; that he did all he could to overcome it, from his sense of its hopelessness on account of his inferiority; but that it haunted him day and night, sleeping and waking, and he nursed it in secret till it became part of himself; and though he breathed not a syllable of it to my cousin, nor to me, till I detected it myself, he cherished it in humble distance, resolving, he said, that it should descend with him to the grave, without its ever being known to her, or to you?'

" 'Quite like himself, and most like a gentleman,' said my uncle, though with a look of astonishment. 'But go on. With such a resolution, why did he trust himself here?'

" 'His worldly situation is much changed,' answered I.

" 'Ha!' exclaimed Mr. Hastings; 'what am I to understand by that? Has he addressed Bertha?'

" 'He said this with agitation.—'No?' replied I, quickly, 'or you would have in the instant known it from her, as soon as she knew it herself, but from him before; for, much as he loved her, he never would have even told his love without your previous approbation.'

" 'That alters the case,' observed Mr. Hastings, still in a sort of confusion from surprise; 'but how is it then that neither of us have known any thing of it?'

" 'From the same modesty,' answered I, 'which he felt in humbler circumstances, and which has not yet abandoned him. I know

that up to yesterday he was in misery, from doubt of the event ; and even talked of accompanying me to Germany, in despair both of her affection and your consent.'

" ' If he can gain her affection,' replied my uncle, after a little thought, ' I know not why he should despair of my consent.'

" He said this with an air of dignified decision, as if he had measured all your pretension with his own, and, only after the consideration due to his own, had decided in your favour. I must, however, do the dear old man the justice to say that he added, ' 'Tis true, Bertha is no longer the rich heiress she was, such being the will of Providence, "the wind and storm fulfilling his word". But as, if she were poorer than she will be, I am sure this would make no difference in him ; so, were she richer than she is, it would make none in me.'

" I sincerely complimented him upon this honourable sentiment."

" And what must I do? my dear Granville," cried I, no longer able to keep silence. " How admire or thank him enough? O! that some favourable aspect may appear in the other horizon, which I begin verily almost to believe may be, under the auspices of that incomparable woman, who, like yourself, seems born to be my tutelary deity. How can I ever thank you, my true friend, for all you have told me?"

" Still there is much to do," observed Granville.

" Which it makes my heart tremble to think of," said I. " Pray did Mr. Hastings suggest nothing in regard to my proceedings?"

" Nothing ; except that he was so pleased with your honourable intentions, of first apprizing him of your views before you addressed his daughter, that he gives you *carte blanche* to act as you please, determining, in the mean time, in order to leave you a fair field, as he thinks would be most agreeable to you, not to interpose with either persuasion or advice. Can you wish for more?"

" O, no! If to be a messenger of good tidings is to be one, you are an absolute evangelist. Again, how shall I thank you?"

" By letting me see you as happy as myself."

" God send it!"

' Evidently alluding to the hurricane.

CHAPTER XL.

OF THE NOBLE CANDOUR DISPLAYED BY BERTHA.—FRIENDSHIP AND GOOD OFFICES
OF LADY HUNGERFORD.

If it were now to die,
'T were now to be most happy; for I fear
My soul hath her content so absolute,
That not another comfort like to this
Succeeds in unknown fate.

SHAKSPEARE.—*Othello*.

THE information from Granville with which I concluded the last chapter made, as may be supposed, a considerable change for the better in all my prospects. Furnished with such armour of proof as the favourable disposition of Mr. Hastings, I gave way with more confidence to the delight inspired by Lady Hungerford's assurances.

Yet I felt bewildered, and knew not exactly how to proceed. At first I was for instantly seeking a personal interview with Bertha; then, thinking that too confident, for sending to ask permission for an audience in form; then, to address her through Lady Hungerford, whom I would entreat to be my mediatrix; then through her father himself. But I could determine finally upon none of these plans, and suffered not a little raillery from Lady Hungerford, who, however, consoled me by saying she liked me the better for it.

"I would not care half so much," said she, "for the success of your object, if I saw you setting methodically about it, as a matter of business, or even with the dignity and self-possession of an experienced great man of the world. Your tremors and indecision are quite taking, and I would not help you, if I could, to get rid of them; except, indeed, that, as I am to leave you all to-morrow, it would be more pleasant to leave you comfortable. Indeed, anxiety about my dearest Bertha is the only alloy I feel to my own happiness."

Then seeing that I was still in a confusion of plans, the kind lady said—

"Well, I perceive you scholars and fine-minded people are but children after all, where a love affair is concerned. Why, a French marquis, or even an English militia captain, would beat you all to nothing were the case theirs; and I think I must continue to be the patroness you used to do me the honour to call me, and so far smoothe the way, as to communicate to your queen, what she ought

in the first instance to know—the result of Mr. Granville's conference with his uncle this morning."

This greatly relieved me, and my face I suppose shewed it, for she said—

"There, now the sun shines again! I have but an hour more of the morning for my own affairs, but I will give half of it to yours."

So saying, she left me, but before she tript quite away, advised me not by any means to part with my anxious look, but go and walk under Bertha's window, with my arms folded across, my hat slouched over my eyes; "and be sure," said she, "to sigh like furnace." Her cheerful tone did me all the good possible, and I thanked my stars for having given me such a friend.

Her half hour, however, lengthened into a whole one, and indeed seemed so unbearably long, that I was tempted to obey her last piece of advice to the letter, and found myself actually under the window pointed out, almost in the very predicament recommended; only it would have been in vain, for there was no one above to behold it.

In time she came back, with a busy seriousness, though not a sorrowful one, in her eye, and taking me with her along the terrace, said kindly and encouragingly—

"I have been long, for such explanations cannot be made in the twinkling of an eye, and a young lady cannot be expected to yield herself up to a young gentleman on a summons being sent her by a neutral power. Not however to frighten you, for I see you are already alarmed, I come to conduct you to Bertha, and to tell you she is too good a daughter not to obey her father.—No raptures, but let quiet be the order of the day, for she is overcome with surprise, and in no mood to encounter a storm."

"My dear, dear Madam—" cried I.

"I tell you be quiet," said she, "and even silent, if possible, with Bertha herself, to whom I have promised to bring you."

"Oh! tell me but where, that I may fly——"

"No! flying won't do, neither. You must proceed soberly with me to the garden door of her father's room, where she is, and which is luckily vacant just now for half an hour, he being driving out with Mr. Granville, with whom he has business; and when there, I shall leave you. Nay, if you tremble so, I will not answer for your success."

I could augur nothing ill from such pleasantry, so accompanied the dear lady round to the other side of the house, and, through the glass door, into the well-known room, where I found the long-loved object of my vows. Certainly, as her friend had told me, she seemed in no condition to encounter a storm; for she appeared faint, agitated, and deeply pensive; and when we entered, moved

not her head from the hand which supported it, her elbow leaning on the end of the sofa where she was sitting.

Though her cheek was flushed, and her eyes averted, she had stretched out the other hand on one of the cushions, and Lady Hungerford perceiving it, placed it gently in mine, and saying she thought she could not do better than leave us by ourselves, fairly quitted the room.

Oh, what a moment! after all I had gone through! and what wonder if I scarcely possessed my mind any more than Bertha herself, whose eyes continued to be covered by the hand on which she leaned, though the other gladdened my very soul by returning the pressure of mine. Nay, when dropping on one knee, I pressed it to my lips, though there was a sort of struggle (a very gentle one) to withdraw it, she did not altogether take it from me, but allowed it still to remain.

At last, finding my tongue, which till now had denied its office, I exclaimed,

“Oh, God of heaven! is it possible that I can be thus repaid at last, after years of devotion, torture, and despair? Is it possible that Lady Hungerford’s intelligence can be true, and that I am not in a dream? If I am, let me never awake, nor again encounter the misery and hopelessness of reality.”

Bertha’s only answer, at first, was by a more sensible pressure by her hand; but in a few moments I heard, in a still, soft whisper, the words,

“No, Mr. De Clifford, as I must believe all I have been told of my father’s approbation, it is no dream; but (and her voice here became softer and softer), as Lady Hungerford has no doubt told you, you must not take me away from *him*.”

Then turning her glowing cheek (glowing with the purest blush of modesty that ever love knew), and seeing me still on my knee, she said with quickness,

“Oh! why is this? Surely this does not become Mr. De Clifford to descend to, nor me to suffer. This must never—never be. Oh! rise—rise, I entreat you.”

I obeyed; and taking my seat by her side, we felt, by degrees, somewhat more at ease. To detail however, all that passed in this delicious moment of unlooked-for happiness—of unreserved and authorized confidence—is not only not necessary, but would be impossible if it were. Suffice it, that my feelings were gratified to their utmost power of bearing, by the dear and melting tidings which, by degrees, she allowed me to elicit from her; for I learned, with what feelings may be imagined, that she had perceived my love for her even in her girlhood, from the earliest moments of its existence; had felt it with an interest only enhanced by seeing it

cherished so long in silence and distance, under fears and hopelessness, such as had always prevented its open profession; that its constancy under so many trials, but, in particular, under that great one of supposed unkindness, had touched her heart with a sort of remorse, which a sense of her engagement could alone dispel; but that when the engagement was at an end, the warmth I had shewn in her defence when attacked, and the appalling danger I had encountered in asserting her cause, had weakened her self-control, so that when she saw me once more under the paternal roof, possessing so much of her father's regard, and my cause espoused by the friends she most loved in the world, she acknowledged that all I wished was reciprocal. Finally, to my ineffable delight, she wound up these confessions (though I only gained them from her after many intervals of pause and hesitation, which increased their interest a hundred-fold) with a frank avowal, in the very words of Portia—which had never been absent from her memory since she heard them—that she willingly committed her gentle spirit to mine, to be directed,

“As from her lord, her governor, and king.”

Let those who, like me, have loved to desperation, imagine, if they can, the effect of this thrilling confession on the ears that heard, and the heart that felt it. Language in vain attempts to describe it, and sinks in the endeavour. All that can be said is, that the sweet character of this delightful creature was arrayed in its own peculiar lustre, and that openness, softness, delicacy, and affection (now not only not opposed, but encouraged to develop themselves), shone out in all their purity, and all their attraction.

Their effect upon my faculties, which had so long been oppressed with doubt and uncertainty—the sport of every whisper, and almost every look,—was miraculous. My powers were suddenly strengthened, as by a potent spell or vivifying cordial, and I felt that not that nepenthe, given in Egypt by the wife of Thone to Jove-born Helena,

“Was of such power to stir up joy as this.”

I will not say that this was the happiest moment of my life, because tumultuous happiness yields in real joy to that which is more sedate, and, thanks to heaven and this inestimable person, I have had many moments with her since, more tranquil, yet far more precious in their effect upon the heart. But never had her beauty, set off with the maiden blush of modesty, appeared to my charmed eyes half so engaging. Had I, therefore, been conqueror of the world, I could not have felt more elate; and at a loss to thank her,

spite of her prohibition, I threw myself again at her feet, and invoked the blessing of heaven upon her dear head, for the goodness and noble frankness she had shewn.

How long we might have remained in this delirium (for it was little less) I don't know, but it was put an end to by the return of Lady Hungerford, who, seeing how things were, fondly kissed her young friend, and shaking hands with me, congratulated herself upon having produced such a happy state of things, the consummation of which, by being ratified by Mr. Hastings, was all, she said, that was now wanting.

This, we hoped, was now at hand, by the return of the carriage in which Granville had driven his uncle for an airing. Bertha was confused, and trembled at the approach of her father; and Lady Hungerford proposed her retiring to her chamber to regain a little calm, in which she acquiesced: and as Mr. Hastings generally reposed for half an hour by himself after returning from his drive, we all retreated from his apartment to leave it free.

Meantime this best of friends, with her usual presence of mind, planned with Granville the mode of communicating what had passed to Mr. Hastings, on his awakening from his usual noontide doze.

With what restlessness did I not watch the progress of it—how I wished old people were not invalids; or if they were, and were forced to sleep in the daytime, that they would not sleep so long.

It was just an hour after Mr. Hastings took to his couch before he awoke from his refreshing slumber, and called for his daughter, instead of whom Granville presented himself. Meantime I had not known how to beguile the interval. Lady Hungerford was once more shut up with her dear pupil, and Granville was most provokingly absorbed in marriage papers, which had to be inspected and signed before the next morning. I was therefore left entirely to myself, to indulge my hopes in soliloquy, or whisper my fears to the oaks and beeches of the park.

But, thanks to my happy fortunes, there was no occasion for fear. Mr. Hastings' waking was one of the *molliæ tempora fandi*, which Granville, with his usual kindness and usual promptitude, seized, and, as he frankly said, with little, or rather no difficulty, profited by it so effectually, that an hour afterwards beheld both Bertha and myself on our knees, kissing the hands of her father, and asking and receiving his blessing, and as free and full consent to our union as my own or Bertha's dutiful heart could wish.

And here, having brought the more changeful parts of my life, though yet in its early days, to a termination, I might close these memoirs. For though eventful to me, and amply confirming all the maxims regarding human life which I had imbibed from my sage and practised preceptors, Fothergill, Manners, and Lord Cas-

leton, few incidents remain which might particularly interest the reader. I cannot, however, conclude without noticing the consummation of the happiness of my two admirable friends, to whom I owe the chief blessing of my life, in her who gilded its dawn, its meridian, and its sunset.

I wish also to add to these notices, one which, for the sake of the moral it affords, if not for the intrinsic interest it contains, may be deemed not an unimportant feature in perhaps the most important of all sciences, the science of Human Nature.

CHAPTER XLI.

OF THE VAIN EFFORTS TO RECOVER FROM THE EFFECTS OF VICE WHEN MADE TOO LATE.—AFFECTING CONCLUSION OF THE HISTORY OF SIR HARRY MELFORD.

Try what repentance can. What can it not?
Yet what can it, when one cannot repent?

SHAKSPEARE.--*Hamlet*.

THE allusion made at the end of the last chapter was to Sir Harry Melford, a man who, whether from his original disposition to value the decencies, if not the virtues of life, or the accomplishments of his mind and manners, was certainly made for better fortune than befel him.

Our last mention of him was at a dinner at Granville's in town, where he shewed a humour and perversion of principle, which made it little likely that he should so soon, or at all, exhibit such feelings as the letter I am about to transcribe evinces. It was received by Granville only the day before his nuptials, and was written to him in consequence of the expectation of them, which was spread all over Yorkshire.

I had observed the arrival of the packet, and that it instantly occasioned a seriousness both in Granville and Lady Hungerford. They were closeted upon it for near an hour, and afterwards, to my great wonder, with Bertha. For, happy as I was, I was still sensitive, and dreaded some announcement respecting the prince, or perhaps a new suitor. The conference, too, lasted long, nor was I relieved by seeing that the two ladies were considerably affected. I was, however, restored by being allowed to read the packet, which was as follows :—

"Melford Hall, 10th August, 17—.

"MY DEAR FRIEND,

"I have heard with unfeigned pleasure, but I must add, not without envy, the accounts of your approaching nuptials with perhaps the most admired lady in Europe. I felt the pleasure on your account—the envy on my own. Alas! Granville, when we set out in life, which we did almost together, who would have thought (and what but my own accursed folly could have effected it), that in ten years time, before youth had quite departed, our lots should be so differently cast? When we started, I had the advantage at least in point of fortune, and was equal to you in connection, perhaps I might say in personal, though certainly not in mental accomplishments.

"Where are we now? You, covered with honours, the fruit of merit and character, and crowned with all the felicity which pure and virtuous love can produce; I—but I fear to enter upon the terrible subject, though I have so long planned it, longed for it, and only waited for the occasion of your marriage, to execute my design. It would be a relief, I thought, to my half-broken heart, to open it to you; yet now the time is come, I shrink from it with a fear and irresolution of which I am ashamed. But, whatever it cost, I will proceed.

"That evil genius of mine, Hortense—the scene you found me in with her at Wetherby, near two years ago, has scarce ever been out of my mind since. Oh! how different from that to which you were sent to invite me¹; and what a contrast that wretched woman, to the angel who would have been ready to have received me, had my sense of my own unworthiness allowed me to accept the invitation. No; so far I had grace, that I could not—dared not insult the pure presence of that lovely being, by rushing into it, reeking from one who was her total opposite. Nor, though another wretch has since been born to reproach me, and prove the shame of both parents, has it in the least altered my disgust both at myself and its mother.

"Although, therefore, when I dined with you some time ago, wine, and fear, and shame, made me play the bully, in affronting all that good taste, as much as good morals, holds sacred, I too deeply felt, and have since too keenly remembered, the affecting contrast which Brownlow (another happy man) drew between a wife and a mistress, and how severely to myself he proved that Hortense was nothing but a ——: no; I cannot write the word².

¹ See Vol. II. p. 125.

² See the conversation at Granville's dinner, Vol. II. p. 131.

“Alas! my misfortune is, that to that mother of my children, from I know not what cause, I feel in such cowardly subservience, that I in vain plan an endeavour to get free. Oh! that you, or Brownlow, or both conjoined, could help me, and redeem me from a curse more heavy than Cain’s, of being exiled from all that I once prized, and still would recover, if I could—the conversation and esteem of virtuous society. Say what we will, and however education, from our earliest years, may corrupt us, or example palliate the mischief, the loss of this, till we are absolutely cankered! and rotten in mind, can never but be lamented with unbearable agony, and as I am not yet so cankered, I own to you all my misery.

“Wonder not at my talking of corruption from our earliest years; for what education does not promote, instead of resisting it? What school-boy, but above all, what collegian, is not taught by his own passions, and the force of example in all around him, to make light of that virtue which interferes with his pleasures, whether of women, wine, or gaming—or if it only restrain one particle of his liberty, though for the sake of wholesome discipline? Who, however young, does not place his point of honour in being a man, in vice, before his time? To be libertine, extravagant, sensual, immodest, beyond others, is to be manly, bold, prosperous, and the envy of his fellows.

“Is there any thing in his studies, or what his tutors daily exact from him, to repress this? Is there a single moral or religious precept taught him, or a single moral or religious book put into his hands, after he has left nursery? No. All the licentious contrary. The vehicles of his learning are all of them panders to vice, by rendering his imagination prurient under the pretence of polishing it.

“He cannot be a scholar without Latin and Greek; and he cannot have Latin and Greek except through the medium of Virgil, Ovid, Horace, Homer, and Anacreon. I do not deny the importance of these as masters of song; but their effect upon the mind, from the tales of debauchery which they contain, both of gods and men, I need not point out to you.

“What wonder, then, if every school is a hotbed of self-indulgence, and, in respect to chastity, the destruction of all principle? Hence our later years demand all our energies in the correction (and happy he who is not too far gone to succeed) of the canker and infection contracted in our younger.

“That I, having fallen, have not been able to recover myself as others have, can never be sufficiently deplored; but it is this education, supposed so liberal and so polished, that has ruined me.

* See Foljambe Hastings’ case, Vol. I. ch. 14.

“One chance I had for the reformation I sought, in attaching myself to an angel of light : I failed, and fell back upon an angel of darkness. When I was where you are now, I thought myself in Eden ; but have long felt for ever expelled from that happy place, guarded as it is against me by the flaming sword which protects it from every thing impure.

“Oh ! miserable, wretched mistake !—ineffable cowardice !—weak and illiberal, as ruinous pique ! which made me think the loss of Heaven could be compensated by an alliance with hell ! It is not that Hortense is grossly wicked, or abandoned in every thing. She is even a good mother to her children, though indifferent to their father ; especially since I have refused the great, and I believe, only object she had in view when she gave herself to me—marriage. To gratify her in this would both stultify and disgrace myself ; yet to continue in this state is more disgraceful, and renders my return to society impossible, if I ever could return to it with the credit, without which perpetual banishment would be preferable. Miserable, deplorable, irremediable alternative !

“I have offered her largely to induce her to quit me ; but she goes into fits (sometimes of dudgeon, and sometimes, what is worse, of tenderness) at the thought. Were it only a question of terms, I would arrange it, though it cost half my fortune ; but unless she met some one as weak and as rich as myself to engage her, it is easy to see she would perpetually persecute me.

“Then, again, the children ! If I leave them to her, I consign them to infamy, probably to ruin, especially the girl. If I retain them myself, what are they but living reproaches and monuments of folly, to call it nothing else ?

“O Granville ! could your blessed cousin witness my remorse, my misery, my sense of shame, she would pity and forgive me. I say forgive ; for it is against *her* I have sinned. What was it but sin to think I could console myself for her rejection in the arms of a——but I again check myself. How dearly I have paid for the mistake, and how deeply every word that Brownlow spoke upon the subject has told upon my heart, this letter will demonstrate.

“Comfort, counsel me, dear Granville. I dare not ask to be presented to your matchless lady, still less to be endured again at Foljambe Park ; for they are all like the Jasmins of Jesse, so feelingly quoted by Brownlow ; they all seem to tell me, ‘We are spotless, we are pure ;’ while I must either hide myself from the world, or course through it with a mark set upon me to be shunned.

“Yet am I but thirty years old, and thus thrown away upon a dunghill, instead of being, like you, blessed with reputation, and thrice blessed in the love of that superior person, to whom, if I dared, I would beg you to offer my respects. “H. M.”

This affecting letter, as Granville told me, drew tears from the eyes of the person last mentioned in it, as indeed it did from his own. Lady Hungerford, while she lamented the wreck, as she called it, of such a mind, desired instantly to plan something towards its recovery, and for that purpose decided that the first step should be to separate him from the dangerous Hortense; next, to promise every facility to his return to his place in society, by herself giving him her countenance, and receiving his visits as formerly. Nay, she even went so far as to plan his reception once more, if he chose it, at Foljambe, and, for this purpose, proposed communicating the letter to Bertha,

"Poor girl!" said she; "she will see herself, in some measure, a party concerned; and having, though most unintentionally, through his despair, driven him from the paths of virtue, she ought, and will, I have no doubt, do what she can to smooth his return to it."

Granville, after some hesitation, from a fear of exposing his friend, withdrew his objection to the measure so far, that the purport of the letter, though not actually the letter itself, should be laid before Bertha and Mr. Hastings, who both gave Lady Hungerford all the assurances she anticipated, of their desire to second her benevolent object. But the letter itself, and the discussion which it prompted, excited much feeling, and many reminiscences, and hence the effect which, as I have related, so surprised and so interested me in the demeanour and countenance of both Bertha and Lady Hungerford.

I wish I could conclude this episode with satisfaction; but this the event forbids. Granville, after he got stationary, communicated to Sir Harry all the good wishes of both his old friends, and their readiness to allow him to renew his former habits with them. He was penetrated, and deeply grateful, but said he dared not profit by it while his entanglement with Hortense continued. He would not shock them, he said, by bringing his unworthy person into their presence.

Meantime, all Granville's endeavours to procure the separation so much desired between him and his mistress failed. An immense settlement did not tempt her; she was about to make him a third time a father, and perceived by its effect upon him what advantage it gave her towards her object. In short, to use his own emphatic words, it plunged him deeper and deeper in the filth of his situation, by clogging more and more his attempts to extricate himself from it; so that the morals of English society (after all that has been said of our corruptions) not permitting a man with his inconvenient feelings of propriety to shew himself here, he fairly renounced his country, and all his brilliant advantages in it, and settled himself at Paris.

There, a complete alien, he found himself without power to turn either his talents or fortune to account abroad, or to obtain peace or comfort from his ill-selected companion at home. On the contrary, his pledges of guilty intercourse (for he would not call it pleasure) increasing, he for their sakes consented, at forty, to marry Hortense, who was as old as himself, then deprived of all personal attractions, and wholly without power to compensate the loss by any mental endowments.

Their life, therefore, may be imagined. Every thing like attachment having long been over—he despising her, and she never having loved him—their union was a perpetual bickering, and she would now have gladly consented to a separation, provided he would have allowed the children to follow her, which he refused.

But even these, whose education and welfare were the only interests he had left, failed to give him what he thought, as a father, he had a right to expect. Not because they had any particular faults of character; on the contrary, they were amiable; but unfortunately, this very circumstance made his regrets more poignant. “They are bastards,” said he, “and not presentable in the world; they are not even pledges of love, and therefore give no pleasure at home; their very merits reproach me the more, for having deprived them of their natural rights.”

In this state of mortification he dragged on many years, after being delivered by death from the millstone which had sunk him. But his estates being entailed, he could make no provision for his numerous progeny, except by savings, which he pushed to such an extreme of parsimony, that only with the character of a miser, and a sordid exterior, this once gay, liberal, and accomplished man returned to the hall of his ancestors, where, from long absence, and his misspent life, he found nothing in the respect of friends or neighbours to welcome him home, and looked in vain to the approbation of his own conscience to cheer and console him in his age.

CHAPTER XLII.

A WEDDING-DAY UNLIKE ALL OTHER WEDDING-DAYS TO BE FOUND IN ROMANCES ;
HAVING NO SHEW, THOUGH MUCH HAPPINESS.—SWEET CONSCIOUSNESS SHEWN BY
BERTHA.

The wedding, mannerly modest.

SHAKSPEARE.—*Much Ado about Nothing.*

I have mark'd

A thousand blushing apparitions

To start into her face; a thousand innocent shames,

In angel whiteness bear away those blushes.

Idem.

THE chronology of facts as they arose, and the importance of the catastrophe of Sir Harry Melford, alone induced me to interrupt the chain of cheerful and happy events which now occupy these memoirs. I with pleasure return, to record the ceremony which united Granville and Lady Hungerford.

From the taste and temper of the parties, and Mr. Hastings' infirm state of health, the wedding and wedding-day of the beloved friends passed rather in happy calm than mirthful exaltation. Though the pattern of elegance and queen of fashion, as I have often called her, Lady Hungerford was attired at the ceremony in the simplicity almost of a village maiden. No pompous ornaments; no laced veils flowing from head to foot, and enveloping her graceful limbs; not even one of her dazzling jewelled bracelets, to outshine and put out of countenance the modest wedding ring, which Granville placed upon her finger. A gown of plain white silk, and a flower in her dark glossy hair, were all the display she chose to make. Her maid, Mrs. Barbara, was by far the most distinguished figure of the two; as (to follow her example) the faithful Margaret was superior to her young mistress, who, as bride's-maid, was arrayed in equal simplicity with her friend.

But exclusive of the temper of mind in which those most concerned found themselves, there were no great family feelings or prospects aroused by the event. Granville was no rich heir, to call upon an extended tenantry or neighbourhood of friends to compliment him with joy and jollity on his entering on his new estate; and his accomplished and noble wife had been too much used to pomp and festivity not to wish to give play to her natural taste and disposition, which, without hating or despising grandeur, were made for something better. She therefore, with her whole heart,

preferred the quiet but sincere felicitations of her most beloved friend and her honourable father, to any exuberant display that could be made in compliment to her nuptials. She, however, herself made up for the want of stir and excitement in the adjoining hamlets, by a handsome gift of money, to be distributed to the poorer classes at the discretion of Bertha ; and but for the joy occasioned by this, the church bells, and an ample dinner given by Mr. Hastings to his household, no one could have divined that a peeress had been married that morning to an ambassador of the state.

Strange to say, part of the honey-moon was to be kept in Berkeley Square, owing to the necessity for Granville's preparing for his mission abroad, and they planned, on leaving the church door, to pass some days on the road, in seeing the Dukeries, the wonders of the peak, and the witchery of Warwick Castle. But the great event which I have just recorded, involving so much of the future happiness of one so dear to them both, altered (fortunately for us) the whole of this plan of pleasure, which they generously gave up, that Lady Hungerford might not quit her friend when she most wanted her. The consequence was, that four, or ought I not to say five, happier people never were assembled than the Foljambe mansion saw under its roof during the week succeeding the nuptials.

It may be guessed how that week was passed by us all ; but to me the interests were intense, and not the less because it was then that I learned from the lips of Bertha herself the whole of her story with Prince Adolphus, and was allowed to peruse those interesting letters which so well elucidated it.

An interest still greater was occasioned by Lady Hungerford. For that pattern of a friend having, as she said, been so instrumental in producing the present state of things, declared she could not leave her work incomplete, particularly as she was about to leave us all, perhaps for years. She was, therefore, eager to see things, so happily in train, brought to a still happier conclusion ; and as she was all-powerful with Mr. Hastings, as well as with Bertha, she did not scruple to propose, and urge to both, with all her talents for persuasion, that a day should be named.

To this the only answer returned by Bertha was by blushes, which Titian would have blessed his good fortune could he have seen ; and on the part of Mr. Hastings there was no delay desired except what was in strict reason necessary from settlements, not required, but offered. For as well from my own wishes, as to shorten all delays, I made quick work of it, by desiring every thing I possessed in the world, together with every thing that Bertha might hereafter possess, might not only form her dower, but be hers for ever.

To this, the justice of Mr. Hastings made a large exception, in regard to the estates of Bardolfe and the Grange, which he insisted should be conveyed to my family in default of progeny. And thus days and weeks were spared in this most important matter.

During the interval, I cannot describe the felicity, from their pleasing employments, of every one of the inmates of Foljambe; the visions of happiness of the upper ranks, and the busy importance of the lower, down to the lowest, especially the females. For, from the looks and bustle of even the house and kitchen maids, not to mention the village laundresses, (who only felt a sort of reflected consequence from the hall), you might detect that some event, of a solemn and dignified character, affecting the peace and prosperity of the whole of this little community, was in preparation.

Here the Mesdames Margaret and Barbara naturally took the lead, and enterprises of great pith and moment, *scilicet*, certain daily expeditions to the milliners and mercers at York,—for which purpose, to their no small gratification, I lent them my post-chaise,—engaged the whole force of their genius in the service of their respective mistresses.

For my own part, the happy faces that surrounded me, the pleasure of Mr. Hastings, shewn in a profusion of paternal caresses to the darling and stay of his life, and the joy of our two admirable friends, would have made my heart dilate with pleasure, had there been no other cause for it. But Bertha! my long-loved, long-despaired-of Bertha, now my betrothed as well as beloved! how can I tell the impressions of delight which the mere sight of her speaking animation inspired? Oh! how did every look, every blush, every little hesitating, yet always graceful, movement speak to me! She perhaps had not the striking *maintien* of her friend, though the want of that (if it was wanting) was probably alone owing to the circumstance of Lady Hungerford's greater prominence in the world, and the retirement of her own life. But there was a winning softness, and, above all, a consciousness, growing daily and hourly more and more moving, that was absolutely bewitching. That consciousness met me at every turn; in every look she gave, and every one she endeavoured *not* to give;—in the tones of her voice when she spoke, and the timidity of her eye when she smiled. Oh! who can tell the charm of this; or of a cheek, “rosied o’er with the virgin crimson of modesty?”

Possibly some of my readers, who have been in the same situation, may know what I mean. No others can. For if you ransack the whole history of the human heart, and every scene in which it has shewn itself, you can never discover any thing so intensely, so enchantingly inspiring as that modest consciousness I have mentioned. Hence, perhaps, the most interesting sight in nature is,

when a young girl has first disclosed her secret to him whom she has selected to be the ruler of her destiny—the man of her choice—possessing, and worthy of possessing, her love, and enjoying the full approbation of her parents.

Such I had the proud delight of feeling was my situation with Bertha, nor did I think it possible for mental enjoyment to be carried farther.

Here then I stop :—for though the delicious life I afterwards led with her, and the three angels which she gave me, exceeded by far, in real happiness, the moments of excitement, still I am aware of how little comparative interest it will possess for strangers, such probably as those who may think it worth while to read these memoirs. The race over, the enjoyment of the victory becomes tame to the spectators. I will therefore content myself with reporting, that in less than three weeks after the happiness of Granville was secured with his estimable lady, my own was sealed with her lovely pupil, under the auspices and blessing of Fothergill, who came over from Oxford expressly for that purpose.

Mr. Hastings' health alone prevented the fulfilment of his own and his daughter's wish, that my excellent parents and honest brothers should be present at the ceremony. But at Bertha's desire we soon after paid them a visit of duty, in which, had they been still among the nobility of England, she could not have shewn them more deference or attention. My father shed tears, for the first time in his life, at seeing the angel I had brought him. My

“Mother did not speak,
But she looked in my face, till my heart was like to break,”

not certainly with grief.

It may, I hope, be imagined that I shared some of my prosperity with these worthy relations, who could scarcely be persuaded that the whole was not a dream, till our periodical visit to the old castle, where the lodging fitted up by my revered benefactor, Manners, supplied comfortable accommodation, convinced them that all was real.

CHAPTER XLIII.

CONCLUSION.

"O! here

Will I set up my everlasting rest."

SHAKSPEARE.—*Romeo and Juliet*.

THE rites of the church being performed, and every the fondest wish of my heart fulfilled, I have, as I have said, no more interests worth describing to set before the reader. Yet could I still consume much time and paper, were I to pursue only part of my married life; particularly if I adventured into the wide field of politics which opened at this time, and in the course of a few short months produced the most extraordinary changes, in not only Lord Castleton's relinquishment of power, but his permanent return to it.

But the interest is sped which could alone engage me in this task. I have too long been at anchor to look at storms without uneasiness, even at a distance. I besides too thoroughly renounced ambition and the glare of public life, for love and the shades of Foljambe Park, to plunge, though only in memory, into this sort of recital. I will, therefore, content myself with relating how this great change in my life was brought about, in which, I trust, I have not hitherto so ill played my part, that the reader will feel no interest in following me.

It may be supposed that Bertha, that great magnet which had caused all my former activity, or rather that planet which had governed all the vicissitudes of my life, still ruled the changes it underwent, and which caused it to subside into its present happy tranquillity.

At first, the only drawback we felt to the most perfect bliss was, the necessity there was for our often being separated. Mr. Hastings' weak state preventing him from moving from Yorkshire, Bertha could never leave him, and my own duties forced me to London. We both felt the misery of this, and, young as I was, I began to yearn after the far more happy, though less glorious, pursuits that blessed my domestic life. The letters of Bertha almost broke my heart, and I sighed to return to her, even were it at the expense of my office and seat in Parliament.

In this situation I beheld with indifference, as far as they were concerned, if I did not behold with something like pleasure, a heavy storm lowering in the political horizon, which might drive

me from office; and all my sorrow at it was, that it would drive my patron from office too. It, however, gave him the opportunity more and more of shewing himself the superior man he was.

The power of the assailants, which, for a time, nothing could withstand, and which in fact stormed the closet of the king, was the consequence of one of those infamous coalitions, in which, to the disgrace of human nature, all the most sacred professions and principles of conduct were broadly and impudently sacrificed, for the sake of obtaining power and pelf.

For a time the assault was irresistible, though Lord Castleton opposed it with firmness and ability, and, to his immortal honour, refused all compromise with his principles, by rejecting with disdain advantageous offers that were made him to join the party coming in. This made him retire, though, with the continued favour of the king and the support of the people, who regarded him with honour, his opponents with indignation. His behaviour under it stamped him with me higher than ever, and only made me laugh at the abuse of the phraseology of historians (surely any thing but philosophers), when they call a minister, who loses his power, *disgraced*. Lord Castleton, though overpowered, was any thing but disgraced:

“What, though the field was lost,
All was not lost.”

The unconquerable will, and possession of his mind in the cause of consistency and patriotism, still remained.

At first, he had no party to support him against an overwhelming aristocracy, and he was completely prepared to carry into effect those sentiments which so charmed me in one of our conversations on the uncertainty and chagrins of power, when he said that one philosophic page read in the closet, with a heart expanding to the wonders and bounties of the Creator, made all the glitter of party success mean in the comparison¹. When he had therefore retired into private life, and was actually at Castleton, I could not help applying to him some of those lines of Pope, as emphatic as well-turned, to another minister, who deserved them, I ween, far less than he:—

“In vain to deserts thy retreat is made,
The Muse attends thee in thy silent shade;
’Tis her’s the brave man’s latest steps to trace,
Rejudge his acts, and dignify disgrace.
When int’rest calls off all her sneaking train,
And all the obliged desert, and all the vain;

¹ See Vol. II. p. 71.

Ev'n now she shades thy ev'ning walks with bays,
(No hireling she, no prostitute to praise);
Ev'n now, observant of the parting ray,
Eyes the calm sunset of thy various day,
Through fortune's cloud, one truly great shall see,
Nor fears to tell that Castleton is he¹."

Unfortunately, however, for the glory of my patron's martyrdom, though the firmness he displayed in the first shock gave promise of his going through with it, the time of probation was too short to complete his pretensions. For his opponents, drunk with their victory, like other drunken men, could not contain themselves, but, in the pride and confidence of their hearts, meditated no less than to deprive the crown of its constitutional power; for which they were justly hurled from their own. The consequence was, the return of Lord Castleton to his former post, and an invitation to me to return to mine.

What might have been the event, had we been all living during the interval in London, plunged with the rest of my party in the struggle that was going on, I do not know. But as it was, we had been leading so heavenly a life, all in all to each other, that to forego it, and, as it were, re-enter a world of strangers, suited not the taste of either Bertha or myself. My own resolution was not indeed so determined as her's, and was just so far balanced that the least favouring incident might decide it one way or the other. That incident was not wanting; yet was it of the simplest, and, as may be thought, of the commonest kind, though it possessed my whole heart at the time; and, as these memoirs have been little more than a picture of that heart, I know not that I can make a better close than by relating it.

The proposal from Lord Castleton had been brought us by the post. Bertha and Mr. Hastings declared they would have no voice in it—that they would not be even consulted, but all should be left to myself. Bertha even affected to be indifferent to a permanent remove from Foljambe, which it was agreed would be necessary if I accepted. Nobody, however, had spoken, and there had been a conscious silence for an hour, when we proceeded to take our usual walk.

It was an almost night-walk in sweetest summer. The evening had stolen luxuriously on our senses; the turf was like velvet to our feet; the gardens shed a thousand balms through the air; all our thoughts were at home.

Our way lay along the margin of the lake, immoveable from the stillness, and just reflecting the taller trees in the soft tints of twilight. Some thirty or forty deer had come down to the water-side,

¹ Verses to Lord Oxford, with Parnell's Works.

to drink, and repose for the night. The freshness, sweetness, and quiet of the scene, reminded me of the description of that season “wherein our Saviour’s birth is celebrated,” when, as it is held,

“The bird of dawning singeth all night long,
And then, they say, no spirit dare stir abroad;
The nights are wholesome; then no planets strike,
Nor faery takes, nor witch hath pow’r to charm:
So hallowed, and so gracious is the time.”

My bosom expanded with a pleasure indescribable, but of the purest kind; gratitude, as well as joy in a lot which had indeed fallen upon me in a goodly ground. Could I think of parting with it, even had I been alone? But the partner of my mind and the adored of my heart hung on my arm. She, too, was informed with the same feelings; she, too, revelled in such a scene, an equal votary of heaven, herself lovelier than any of heaven’s works.

Neither of us spoke, or attempted to describe what we felt. The purest joys, indeed, are generally silent. Each sought happiness from the book of nature, and each read the other’s feelings in that silent book.

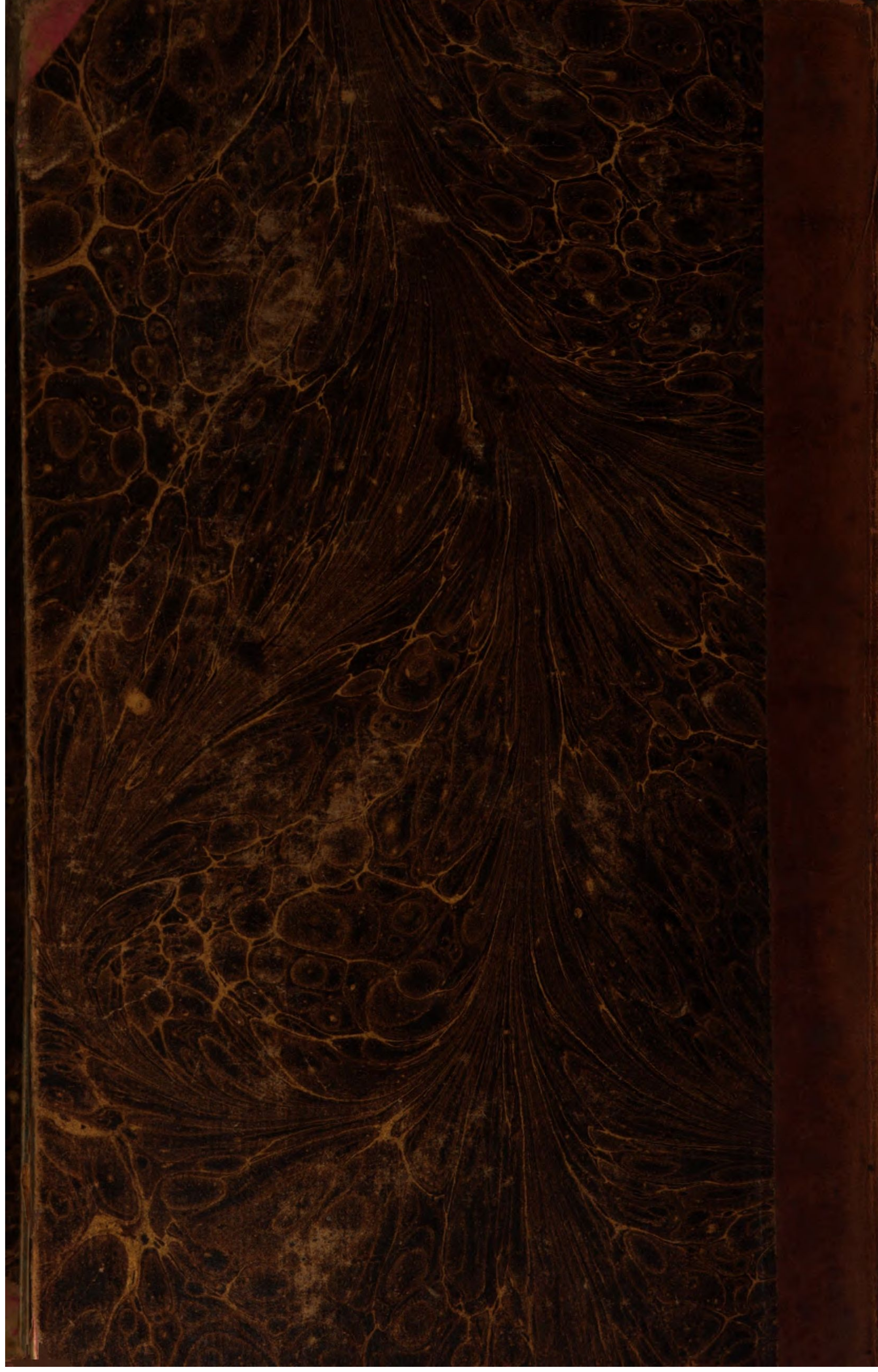
Consentaneously we embraced. I pressed her to my heart; and on her lips “sucked the honey of her music vows;” in the midst of which a low whisper stole on my ear—“Promise not to take me from this place—promise to renounce ambition, and let *me* be your only mistress.”

I promised; and if ever there were minds mingled together, it was ours at that instant, when we were so united in this sentiment, that angels might have thought there were moments, even upon earth, which might equal their own.

Have I explained why, from that instant, I did as I promised, renounce ambition, and offered it at the shrine of domestic happiness,

“Retirement, rural quiet, friendship, books,
Ease and alternate labour, useful life,
Progressive virtue, and approving Heaven.”

THE END.



Ward, Robert Plumer,

Works

Bd.: 3

Paris 1841

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